

Graduate Opportunities

Mike Hill – Practical Next Steps

Mike Hill: Hi, my name is Mike Hill, I'm the Chief Executive of Graduate Prospects. We run the Prospects website which helps graduates find jobs. I've been working with young people and graduates for the last fifteen to twenty years, and I know quite a bit about this subject.

I graduated in 1983, in the teeth of the worst recession since the Second World War. I think the most important thing to do now, is as much research as you possibly can. There is still plenty of time to go into your Careers Service at your university and research through the booklets and magazines and leaflets and newspapers which are available. To be able to speak to careers advisers who are experts in this field and to be able to do some online work with websites which may be able to point you in the right direction.

Given the resources of the careers services, it is very difficult to get a one-to-one interview with a careers adviser – they are still possible and they tend to last fifteen minutes, it's not like in the old days when they lasted an hour. It is also possible though to attend seminars, where one careers adviser, or one person from an organisation, a blue-chip company comes in, and speaks to a room full of people, and the same is true for all sorts of careers as well.

You can contact your careers service for possibly two to three years after you graduate. All careers services are very keen to see their graduates employed and find something useful to do with their lives.

Having an interest, and knowing what you want to do with your career is only step one. Step two, is ensuring that you get a job. That means that you need to apply to the right positions, in good time. That you are succinct in your wording on your application forms, that if you are lucky enough to get an interview, that you prepare through mock interviews, that you practice with peers and with careers advisers, that you do research into the company – it's absolutely vital to be able to go into the company and ask them questions about their ambitions, their new markets, what they're trying to do, what new products and services they're bringing on.

Voxpop 1: It's really important to read up on the job that you're going to be doing, the role but also the company that you're going to be going in to and to see whether you're going to fit into it and to see what's expected of you.

Voxpop 2: You need to research the company, understand what the company's ethos is and then you've got a far greater chance of getting a job once you get the interview.

Mike: Work experience is the most vital aspect of anybody's career aspiration. It's useful because it closes off certain things, so for instance, one might do two weeks in a solicitor's office at Easter and discover that actually they won't become a solicitor – and that is very useful both for you and for the legal profession. You might also do some work experience, say on a construction site and decide that actually civil engineering is the type of thing you want to do. And then you might decide, after graduation to pursue a post-graduate qualification in civil engineering maybe a Masters in tunnelling for instance.

You have to go about it in a methodical way, you have to do research, you have got to take time. You have got to spend at least two hours a week doing some intense research working with careers advisers.

I don't think one should ever look at their career as being the end of one's journey. This is a path, not a destination or a terminus. If you don't know what you want to do with your life, that's nothing to be ashamed of. There are many people who had no idea what they wanted to do at twenty-one, twenty-three or twenty-five – and some people are still searching for their niche in their thirties. But I think what is important to do is try different things and try different experiences.

So, in summary, get careers advice, early and often, and don't panic.