

My Reflections, ADVICE FOR GRADUATES



I was recently invited to be the guest speaker at the University of Western Australia's Arts Awards Night, a rather daunting task of inspiring Arts graduates with an example of one student's journey through life and what can be achieved on the back of a good education. It was a wonderful evening and there were prizes awarded to highly talented individuals across the broad spectrum of the Arts Faculty which nowadays oversees Arts, Education, Business and Law graduates.

Walking back through the grounds of the University after 26 years was emotional and a defining moment of self reflection on the hopes and dreams I held for myself all those years ago. What have I achieved? What more is there still to do? Am I truly reaching my full potential in life? What would I have done differently in the past 26 years if I had the chance to do it all over again? It was a great reminder for me about being thankful for the many blessings that have come into my life and a kick starter to give the next phase of my life my every best effort.

**“Difficult times shape
your outlook on life &
develop resilience”**

I share with you my speech to the Arts graduates from 2019:

I want to share with you tonight my career pathway following graduating in 1993, things I have learnt along the way and some tips as you start to consider your career options ahead. I am incredibly thankful for the **opportunity to attend UWA** and study Arts. You may not get many lucky breaks in life but **getting a good education** from a well-recognised institution will put you in good stead in many circles both in business and career. **Carmen Lawrence Premier of WA** mandated extra University places in 1990, my brother 2 years later was unable to secure a place at university, so I am acutely aware that many opportunities were offered to me because of my studies. I was no academic firepower, I struggled to learn, I entered the schooling system in Adelaide and was a full year younger than my fellow students, and it took me a few years to crack the code on how to learn and absorb new information.

I was fortunate at UWA to have a few tutors really take a personal interest and encourage me to strive for the best I could achieve. This combined with a strong work ethic got me through University with better than just

passable marks. I majored in Industrial Relations which has evolved into Work and Employment Relations. Bizarrely in the year I entered the course, they were considering ending the studies.

Everything to do with Human Capital and the **relationship between employer and employee** has been a theme of my corporate and business career. I am still learning and honing my craft, and I am still passionate about my work. My first proper job was in Sydney working for an IT Software business called Masterpack, I was hired by an American lady, Ginger Mudd. She gave me my first break and I have no doubt that **I would not have got in the door without my Arts Degree**. My first job was as an Education Services Consultant, my job was to train the clients who had bought the software. It was a great entry position, I think I was earning about \$45,000 which was a small fortune in those days. I was finally getting going in life, when all of a sudden, the company laid off many staff and I was made redundant.

This was probably one of the best things that could happen to me. I found out first hand what it was like to be out of work, going into Centrelink to get the dole, having to apply for countless jobs, interviewing and spending my days trying to get re-employed. I think I was out of work for about 4 months, but it was very humbling, and I can't tell you how **valuable difficult times can be to shape your outlook on life**, develop resilience and learn how to be resourceful. You may wish for good times, but it will be how you deal with difficult experiences that will shape you as a person and give you an edge. I eventually got another job with PeopleSoft (now known as Oracle) and this was another very lucky break

as it got me working for a very cool IT company, working in the USA which has been a bit of a spiritual home for me – Americans know how to win, be successful and their business cultures shaped a lot of my thinking around business success and how to create high performance teams.

I would then spend about 8 years working in corporate for companies like Cisco Systems, BMC Software and Deloitte. They were all good experiences, I learnt a lot during this time, I was promoted, got pay rises and I was a bit of a mover and a shaker! When I checked out of corporate, I was being paid close to \$300,000 per annum which in the day was very good income and I felt I had achieved a lot in my time there.

“ I would not have got in the door without my Arts Degree”

How did my degree help me in my corporate career?

Firstly, it got me in the door for job opportunities. There is no doubt that an undergraduate degree is regarded as a baseline for many employers. **Arts has had a bad rap** over the years, but the reality is that if you choose your subjects wisely, there are many career options that can be explored. **When I got in the door for roles**, the degree gave me the basics that I needed to perform analysis, write reports, develop a business case etc etc. It gave me the ability to know how to gather information and solve problems. This was good solid foundation



capabilities that many employers seek when hiring for entry level roles.

Later in life, I came to recognise that **my studies gave me confidence**. I have mentored many high-profile business executives and business owners; if they do not have a University education it is a chip on their shoulder. Some are so successful that they couldn't care less, but most harbour a deep-seated concern that they missed out – and I hate to say it, but I believe that to be true. Even though you can have success regardless; the confidence, the comradery and the love of learning that can come from a university education is hard to replicate.

My corporate career was going well, but I was a frustrated employee. I could have gone on to be a Partner at Deloitte and this is where I reached a cross roads and pursued my entrepreneurial pathway. I knew that to truly get ahead in life, I needed to be the master of my destiny and running my own business. This was in approximately 2002 when I **set up my first recruitment business**. In total I have had 5 start up businesses, all reached multi-million turnover, some were not great successes others have led me to our current business Director Institute which we are building for a major exit. When you start out in business you realise that you have never been taught the things you need to know to be successful in business!

We hear about overnight start-up business successes, but the reality is that it usually takes 10 years to take a business through to exit and to accumulate any significant wealth or have what we call in the trade a "pay day". There are a lot of fundamentals to running a business such as managing cash flow, securing new clients, employing staff, building operations that they don't teach you in school and university. I lent on

my Dad as a mentor very heavily in the early days and I really began to read extensively during this period to develop the knowledge I needed to be successful. I reached out to mentors and advisors; hiring people who were much smarter than me and had real expertise in key areas was a very important part of my success.

Over the years, we have generated just over \$20 million in sales, we have served over 10,000 customers and I have had a degree of success and recognition; although the nature of being an entrepreneur means that you very rarely stop to pat yourself on the back. I want to wrap up with some advice for you in your careers, things that have helped me along the way in my journey.

Get a Career Coach or Business Mentor, every successful CXO that I know has access to them and often they are privately funding them. Leverage these to give you career direction, external perspective, insight into strengths & weaknesses; use different mentors at different times to deal with specific challenges.

Invest 10% of Your Income in your Own Personal & Professional Development. Build hot skills every year, you don't need to complete an MBA's, look for smaller courses and experiences that address current workplace requirements and don't be afraid to develop skills outside of your current area of expertise.

Develop a Love of Learning - attend seminars, read books, watch TedTalks, develop an inquisitive mind that make you a "quick study" when the opportunity arises to take on more responsibility.

Build a Career Plan - without a plan you cannot spot good opportunities and maneuver into position to be offered better roles and experiences.





Develop leadership attributes that will make you a more desirable employee.

Network, Network, Network - your pants off within the business and externally. Well networked executives are never out of work. Leverage modern tools such as LinkedIn, but don't under-estimate the importance of building good relationships by meeting in-person.

Develop a Passion for Business and People. Many people will tell you to find your passion and everything will magically fall into place. I say, develop an 'interest' in business and people and you can have a satisfying career in a range of industries and roles.

Work Smart Not Hard - top level executives are super organised and efficient. Develop a good work ethic and Outsource Everything that is not critical in other parts of your life. I personally outsource everything except the most critical components.

Learn to Recognise Opportunities when they come up and take them with both hands. I had the opportunity to meet people like Sir Richard Branson, Jack Canfield, Oprah, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Human Resources industry icons like Andrew Banks and Julia Ross, Prime Ministers and Premiers – I always looked for ways to meet great business leaders.

Find your purpose – but recognise that your purpose and impact does not need to be global. When my Dad passed away, his funeral was held in Fremantle on a typically hot Perth day, and there we so many mourners, we had to move

them into the larger Chapel. After the funeral people came up to tell me that my Dad had mentored them in business, had given them their first job, had helped them in some small way and they came to pay their respects. I realised there and then, that the impact of your life will be the sum of many small acts of kindness, many small events where you helped someone, mentored someone or assisted someone to reach their goals. I realised my father had a massive impact on many people running a small business. My overarching purpose is to assist people in their careers to reach their full potential. Sometimes the key is the simplicity of your mission and recognising that you are doing some good in the world even on a small scale. **I wish you all the very best of success in your future endeavours.** Thank you for inviting me here today to share with you my story.

Kylie Hammond
achieving amazing results together

Kylie is the **CEO & Founder** of Director Institute Next Generation Directors the fastest-growing network of director talent. An experienced Board Director, serial Entrepreneur, Angel Investor and a leading Board Search & Talent Management Consultant. Book in for a private confidential Career Assessment www.kyliehammond.com