Participant 12 – 16/09/19

DT: So this is interview number 12. Just for the tape, can I confirm you're happy for this to be recorded?

P12: Yes, that's fine.

DT: Great. Thank you. So um, could we start off just you telling me a little bit about your placement search? And the process that took you to you are placement - seems a long time ago?

P12: Yeah. Well, the placement I actually ended up doing was the first one I applied for. Because I remember our, umm Karen, telling us to apply for one that we didn't want first, because we might not get it that way not to be too disheartened. So sort of scrolling the web, like, what would I not mind doing? So I don't want to waste my time of mine, but also wouldn't be that fast if I didn't get and found XXX and thought, yeah, not too bothered about that. And so I applied for that one first. And I think that was just really basic psychometric tests to begin with you umm and then started applying for some others. And umm I think I actually ended up going quite retail. So I think I applied for m&s, Lidl and then I also had things like IBM, and enterprise, and I think that might have been it. Because I did, oh, Virgin Media as well. And I did quite well, in all apart from M&S, they didn't like me. They said, No, but the others I got as far as I did until I stopped because with XXX, that was actually quite, it began, like, the further through the application versus it got it got really hard. I had to answer I think it was 12 questions and it was like max of 3000 was, I think, an answer. And I was writing like page and a half every question, it took so much time, umm that they were actually the last ones to get back to me. First I applied for last ones I heard from. And then yeah, do you want me to go into more detail about that?

DT: Did you have interviews with any other companies?

P12: Urr, so yeah, I went, so with lidl and Virgin Media, I got up to the phone interview, got offered the next one, but didn't end up taking it because by that time, IBM and Audi, I was in the final stages. Umm Enterprise, I didn't even go to the phone interview, because I'd already got the others. Umm IBM, I went all the way. So I had a video interview after online testing. And then I went to their assessment centre in South Bank in London and then they put you into like talent pool, (DT:yes) and select you for a role and then almost phone interview for that role. Umm so I got given a role with IBM, and was told I had 12 days to accept it and then my final interview with XXX was on the 11th day of that. So sort of bricking it a bit as to where it's going to offer me in the room because if not, I wouldn’t know what to do about IBM. And so yeah, then XXX I had all of those tests, and then the umm sort of like interview questions online, then a video interview again, umm and then an assessment centre in Bolton. Oh, boy, that was a bit of a travel. Yeah, that was a lot harder than IBM I found. And then a final interview in Swindon with my managing director and then luckily, I got that on the day. So I had time to say no to IBM so that was good.

DT: So what was harder about the assessment centre?

P12: I think part of it might have been subconsciously that because at this stage, I knew I really wanted XXX I felt a lot more pressured. But I'd heard that you know, (pause) it's like a second best grad scheme in the country so hard to get into that it really was pressurising, and with IBM, there was quite a lot of people that went to my uni that also applied so I knew people there. I didn't know anybody XXX they all went to, I love Bournemouth, but you know, Leeds and Durham and all of the Russell Group unis and I just felt a bit, (pause) I'm a little fish in a really big pond. And with it, IBM, all of the people there are like the staff with their sort of like reassuring, don't worry, they had x placement students there that would talk you through it and where like, today's not going to be hard. XXX it was very, very corporate you and you went in, this is what you're doing. Please don't speak, please ask to leave the room, no feedback throughout, (pause) they would, we were sat around a table and we had six topics to do with an instore experience. I think mine was the customer experience at the tills and you are given then five minutes to plan what you want to say, you've got to stand up in front of the whole room and speak about it for three minutes. And we had no idea whether that was right or wrong, they were so straight faced. And then we finished and there was a group discussion and you, you had like six CVs for a job, role and had to pick one and no matter what you picked, as I found out after, they’d argue and say it was wrong. So there was something about every candidate, like we didn’t pick one because she was pregnant and she wouldn't be able to do full time and they were like that that's discriminatory, you can't do that. But everyone would have had that. So that I like sort of left feeling not confident at all. And at the end you had to mark everybody else in the room, which was really tough, because you don't want to be like, I was the best, but you also don't want to say people were better than you, because if its between you and them, you've just said you think they're better for the role than you are. So that was really hard. Umm (pause) and then yeah, it was sort of like a six hour train ride back from Bolton not having any idea whether it was worth the trip or not. So that was a bit daunting. But yeah, IBM was nice.

DT: So if IBM was nice and XXX was really tough. Why did you choose XXX?

P12: (pause) I like a challenge. I almost I don't know, I mean, the money is so much better which is brilliant. But the sort of the minute you're gone to their websites, it's all says like this, this year is going to kill you sort of thing. Like, if you can't do it, that's fine, don’t But we need people that can and I was sort of like, awww I think I can do that and if I can't, I definitely want to try. And I found that it resonated with me a lot more like, I went into IBM and I did research, but I still felt like I was blagging the whole thing. I didn't really know much about computers or IBM, and it just didn't really inspire me as much as XXX did. So the role itself being able to become an area manager and lead such a huge team with so much responsibility. I just love the idea of it. So yeah.

DT: Okay, that makes sense and so when you have the final interview with managing director, what sort of questions was asked, was that more of a chat or was it quite formal again?

P12: He was really down to earth. He's absolutely lovely. I mean, I've spent a year with him now and I know that he's lovely. But he's very good at that. Like, it was so challenging. I read online on like Glassdoor, there was nothing really like any interview you’ve ever been to and they don't even know if they're allowed to ask the questions they do. Because it's so personal. It wasn't, (pause) with IBM, it's more sort of, of course, there are some personal questions about your strengths and competencies and things like that. But it's also based on the work you're going to be doing. He wasn't really like that, he was like everything you've done so far shows me you're capable academically of doing the role. I want to know if you can physically stand all the challenges. It was very (pause), what do your parents do? How much do they earn? What's your family, like? I mentioned that I had a boyfriend and he was like, is that going to be a problem? Are you going to be able to do all of these hours, how's he going to cope with this? And it was really, you just don't expect to go into a job interview (DT☺No, and open up so much about family and it ended up being because everybody that ended up getting the job with me, went to private schools. And they were all quite well off. So mine was ended up me spilling out all, I'm so driven because my parents don't have a lot of money and I wanted to go and do all of this and you sort of leave thinking (pause) I don’t know if I should have fulfilled that much. But they prob so much it was it was really strange. It was not I mean, I haven't had a lot of job interviews and nothing for this big a role anyway. But yeah, nothing like I mean, I was a bit prepared because it said it was going to be that invasive. But I'm glad I did look, because if I'd got in there not knowing he was going to ask, I don't really know how I would have reacted at all.

DT: It's quite unusual, especially at your stage of your life. (P12: Yeah). Umm, Interesting. So taking you on to the first week, what, what did you have in terms of induction or,

P12: and so we had an event in Manchester on the first day, which I thought was a really nice idea, because they bought all of the placement students from around the country together for two days. Umm sort of learning the ins and outs of the history of XXX, what their core values are things like that. Umm and then what would be expected of us throughout the year, what did we expect from the year. Umm, so that was quite straightforward. That was quite nice. And then spent the first week with our mentors. (pause) So you're sort of like buddied up with an area manager who becomes your almost direct lead. Umm and you follow them for pretty much the whole year in stores before you come up to head office. So mine was down here in Bournemouth and Weymouth and umm, yeah (pause), it seemed (pause) quite a quite exciting because you've just started and you're sort of following everything they do, which seems quite easy, because you're not really doing any of it. You're sort of just shadowing. But my mentor was really hard on me (giggles). So which now looking back, I'm really pleased about, because I don't think I would have achieved everything I did without him. But I think I went home for four out of five days that week in tears. So (pause)

DT: What sort of thing was he saying?

P!2: Oh, it was just really like, I'm quite, quite confident outgoing person and they all are. They're very professional. So I wanted to sort of go out and network and I remember sitting down with him and he was, we've just gone for lunch with another mentor and he was like, these people aren't your friends and I was sort of like, oh my god, and he was like, they're my friends. They're not yours. He was like, Don't speak to them the way you were. He was like, don't engage in conversation like you act like you've worked here for a year. You haven’t, your new and that was really (pause) god, like I took on board that obviously I didn't know you should have been more reserved, because I've just started. Should I sort of sit there and not spoke, speak unless I've spoken to? But at the same time, he was completely asking me not to do everything I've been told to do by everyone for my whole life. Like you're told to get out and network and talk to people. You do find out all about the year seemed really enthusiastic and then I'm being told not to be myself, which I was sort of went home to my boyfriend just in tears, likeI don't know what to do. Like, I now feel like I can't (pause) can’t be myself at work and is this what I want to do for a year? But yeah (pause), so that was hard.

DT: uh, did it make you feel unsettled for a long period?

P12: No, I don't think so (slowly). I mean (pause), slightly, like (smiling), I'd be terrified every time I had to answer the phone to him. But then I think further through the year, the more through out the year I got into it, I realised that everything he was doing was sort of for my own benefit. Like, he set up a lot of things like I didn't really shadow him as much, he would be like, this is what I need you to do for the week, go. And in talking to all the other students, I found that they just weren't doing that they were literally sat and watching them umm and I wouldn't see mine for days at a time. He sent me to cover an area up in Chippenham for a day, completely on my own, which was just unheard of. So he was hard on me, but in being hard on me, I worked a lot harder and then I was sort of respected, not more than the others by everybody else, but could be seen to be doing a lot more. So I got a lot more opportunities. So looking back on it, it was great, but I almost wish (pause), not I wish I'd stood up to him a bit more, but I think he almost expected that of me a little bit. Like, don't take everything, if you if you think something's wrong, say it, which I did towards the end. So yeah, he's from Australia. He's over on a secondment and which is weird, because he says it's so different over there and they're a lot more relaxed.

DT: And yet he said,

P12: he is not relaxed (giggles) he is now, now we've become more more like not so much friends, but we can go out and have a laugh and go for drinks after work and things like that, that I find he is such a relaxed character. But when he's your boss, it's a completely other story.

DT: So he was probably testing you?

P12: Definitely. Yeah, I think so and I also think you come over here for two years from there in your role, in the hopes to go back with a promotion. And I almost think not not selfishly on his part. But if I didn't do well, this year, that would not look good on him. Yeah. So in that respect, or so nd he wanted me to do well, so. Yeah, yeah. I think it was that

DT: interesting and so did you meet any other key people or were you mainly with your mentor?

P12: Oh, no, yeah, I am, so my direct, sort of like he was my direct lead, but my boss, my main report was one of my store ops directors. So there's three of those. So in our Swindon head office where I spent, I went up there for Christmas project as well, which you don't usually do. So I was up there for probably (pause) seven out of 12 months. Umm and all of the directors are in the same, like they have their own offices, but in one big office with all of the regional teams, you've got like trading, property, store ops and accounts. So I worked really closely over Christmas with our trading director, and met a couple pf other trading directors from other regions, worked really closely with our store Ops, directors, even our Managing Director. Umm I didn't have the opportunity to meet too many people further than that outside of our region. I think I met one of the MD’s, which is just below the CEO. Umm but yeah, in terms of even just the managing director of the region, so much more contact than I would imagine you would get in somewhere, say like IBM. So that that was really nice. It's smaller than you think.

DT: Yes, yeah. Yeah. So by the end of the your first week, did you really think you've got a sense of the culture? Did you umm, did you know who XXX were?

P12: Umm, I think so, but I think I almost the, the view I had of them then en and the view I have of them now is so different. You're told it's very, very, like commercial and not commercial - what's the word I used earlier? (pause)corporate. That's why they are very corporate, very German in the sense that you come to work, you don't have fun, you work. And I think after that first week, I was like, wow, this is (pause) really the case like you, you don't email people unless they email you like, you would never just walk into a director's office, you get invited in and that was sort of it. That's quite scary. Like, do I say hello to them in the corridor? Or do I not? But then at the end of it, you realise that actually, I think it is changing. Even just the year I've been there, it seems to have changed so much, even if it's just from the uniform policy being relaxed to things like by the time you do know a director, you can just pop into their office like, yeah, it's strange. That definitely isn't as rigid as I thought it would be.

DT: Okay,

P12: which is sometimes nice, huh?

DT: Yeah, definitely. So tell me a little bit about the job role then?

P12: Umm, so

DT: Or was it constantly changing so it's hard to describe?

P12: Yeah, I mean, like, no two days are the same, but you do have a structure, it's basically the exact same as a first year of the grad scheme, (DT::right). But obviously, they don't give you so much responsibility and they don't give you a car, which isn't anywhere near as nice. Umm but you spend the first six months in store and so you start as a store assistant, and then you work your way up to shadowing with the store manager. Umm and in that time, you do a lot of shadowing of your mentor. So you're doing some area manager training there and store time. And then after six months, you move up to Swindon to do six months in head office, where you're given projects in different areas, so it could be a project and trading or store operations, where (pause) it's really independent, actually, that was quite nerve racking, you sort of go and they give you nothing, you need to find your contacts yourself, work out what you're doing, they just give you a goal and how you get there is up to you. Umm, so that's quite nice. You do get to see (pause)sort of different sides of the business, from every single angle.

DT: So what was your first project?

P12: So I went up at Christmas, which isn't usually, so they have, at Christmas, they allocate all seasonal stock. So stores can't order any seasonal products like advent calendars or biscuits for Christmas. Umm so two area managers would usually go in over Christmas for two months and allocate all of our Christmas stock. They gave that to two of us this year. So I think I went up at the end of October. So I’d only really been there about two months. And then I was up there over Christmas, which was really great and I honestly think that that probably changed my year because I was up there for that period of time working across trading and logistics. So I'm instore ops with my role, but I was working with trading and logistics. Some of that includes speaking to property to know how much space stores have to stop stock. So I'm really did meet everyone, which meant that when and where that wasn't our specific project time, we were sort of not babied, but we had so much help from the directors and because it's a big thing for them if we mess that up, their screwed (laughs). Yeah, so we have a lot of support, which meant that when I came back to do my individual project work, where we were completely on our own, I'd already made all of these connections with people in different areas, which meant it was so much easier for me to call Karen in property and get what I needed to know quickly. So we'd already built that rapport, which was really nice.

DT: That was good and so by the end of your time, how much of the job changed?

P12: (Long pause) Umm. Quite a lot, but I think like what I mentioned earlier about the other students, it really is what you make of it, it's so, (pause) so different, like I was running cash audit for my mentor, whereas some of them had never done one alone. Whereas the girls that stayed in stores over Christmas, could probably have been given a lot more free rein in stores, because they have dealt with it being so busy, whereas we hadn't maybe had as much exposure. But it's so, you go in with a plan and that plan is so chopped and changed. It's outrageous. I left a week early, because they just could not give me a week of holiday, anywhere throughout that year. Because where I'd been out of stores over Christmas, there was so much grading I'd missed out on because you get seven weeks in your last store time where they grade you from 1-7 on every aspect of what you do for two weeks, seven weeks. So I was quite stunned. That was horrible. Yeah.

DT: How did you get on?

P12: (pause) Well in the end, I was getting sevens. But from the beginning, I think, again, what I found really difficult was that in things like safe management, you had knowledge of leadership in all of them. So your knowledge of doing the task and how you sort of like lead the task and whether your team were able to complete it. So things like safe management that really sort of like technical you can do it where you can't, I did really well in, things like, umm I can’t remember what it was called, that personnel management. So leading the team, I for weeks could not get over three and he was like, I'm never going to give you over a three. He was like, area managers can't even get a seven. Now, I'd expect you to be getting seven in your fourth year as an area manager, you're not going to get a seven. And that for me was really, really hard and I was like I want a seven. And I just never seemed to be able to get over three and then Josie would be in the group chat, because we switched mentors quite a lot. I was quite lucky I kept mine but I was the only one that did. Umm and she was all Yeah, Ben would never get made over a three but Bee came in my new mentor and looked at that and said it was unfair and changed it to a five. (Pause) And I would just sit there in, I remember crying twice in my grading. Because I was so frustrated because I was like, this isn't fair. I'm trying so hard and my store ops director is going to look at this sheet of paper having not seen me do any of this and go, Oh, she's got a three, but Josie’s got a five when we're being graded by two completely different people with two completely different specifications, because what one person thinks is a five and another are two completely different things. So that was really hard. But I think that's just a personal thing with me where I take everything to like they I don't even think our Store Ops directors even looked at our grading, yet you're told it's so, so important and it will really rely on like whether you get the job or not, it doesn't. It really doesn't like obviously, if you're getting zeros the whole way through seven weeks. That's a problem, but I didn't have to be the best at everything and I think if I had understood that sooner, appreciated that sooner, I probably would have been a lot less stressed.

DT: Possibly, yes. good lesson to learn though.

P12: Yeah, definitely. Absolutely.

DT: So did you change or adapt any processes? Did you have the opportunity to put your own stamp on things?

P12: Oh, God, yeah. I'll bring it to you actually, because I don’t have it with me today. Umm, but my project for my second project, umm I ended up doing a pair with a guy called Tom and our area was inventory. So we had 7, 14 weeks, and we had to improve inventory. They didn't tell us how, umm and we went out to 50 stores across the region. And umm I think we surveyed 164 managers on basically a quiz that we've made, based on individual topics surrounding inventory. And this we initially wanted to focus on, what was it, I think it was price reduction, managing specials, because we'd get price reduction, if it wasn't inputted right, on specials, we'd lose a lot of stock where we shouldn't, so we wanted to focus on that. Umm and in going out to the stores, we realised that knowledge across the board was just dire, it was so bad. Like you should be able to know this before you were even given a management role and there was store managers that didn't know such simple things. So umm we ended up creating what was like a dummies guide to inventory. Umm so yeah, our inventory guide, umm took us ages to make sort of focused on every area of inventory. So it would speak about inventory at the tills, what to avoid in on sort of like one A4 page and then the next one would be a scenario to be able to sort of like put it into perspective, this is what's happening day by day, and the amount of them that would look at it and be like, wow, I do that. And that's so wrong is it would sort of be like, Okay, I'm not as good as I thought I was, this is how I can fix it. And umm that ended up getting printed.

DT: So perfect. Sounds great, I’d love to see it.

P12: Yes, yeah. So every manager in our region now has one of their own, my mentors taken it to Australia. And umm I think the XXX, the XXX took it to a XXX committee meeting where the other regions are now looking at it. So we printed like 1400 copies, I think for our region, so

DT: Oh, my goodness, yeah,

P12: That was, that was a really big thing for us. I don't think there's many area managers that would even have something with their name on, actually in the company. So that was, yeah, that was really exciting. It's nice to sort of be able to leave and be like, I did this.

DT: Yes. Because you stand out for something.

P12: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So that was really good.

DT: Yeah. So sort of following on from that, how do you think, what skills have you developed or improved on?

P12: Umm, do you know he asked me this my final interview, and I bet there's so many. But it's really hard to pinpoint specific things. Like he said, my family seen a change in me. And I was like I dunno and he was like, have you asked them? No, not really. But I suppose in every respect, like (pause), quite ironic, because I missed our last meeting, but like punctuality, and organisation, my diary goes everywhere with me, I literally don't go anywhere without it. But I'm able to, like the amount of hours that you have in a day, when you're at uni, when people say I can't get my work done is actually hilarious to look back at now and think, how on earth could you not get your work done? Umm, networking also a lot better, but a lot better in the respect that I wouldn't just say I'm more confident, which is the response you'd expect from everybody. But I'm also a lot more not confident, if that makes sense. In the respect that like with that first week, you don't just go out for lunch with somebody. And like, I was confident and I was excited, but I hadn't been there a year. So I probably should have sat back and listened more than I spoke and things like that. So sort of perspective, being able to tailor the way I put myself across and the conversations I have, depending on who I'm speaking to. Definitely a huge thing, because the way that you would speak to your store assistants, and the way you would speak to your Managing Director are two completely different things. So that's definitely improved, but (pause) I can't really think of anything else that really off the top of my head.

DT: Well that was quite a lot. Yeah, we came out with a few things. Do you feel you have a lot of control over the job role?

P12: (long pause) Yes and no. (pause) in that it was structured, we would be told what to do, at the same, as I said earlier in there, if you want to change something, or you want to say I actually, would you mind, if I don't watch you today, I'd like to go and do it myself. You can but you almost that, you have to want it. They won't just really give you all the opportunities because they want to see if you're going to get them yourselves. But umm (pause) in terms of my year, massively, massively I, I, towards the end of my year, my mentor would be like, I'm around for the week but you're going to run my stores for the week, I have the keys to four stores for a week. And I was, if they had something wrong, it was my phone that was ringing. So that was, (pause) so daunting, but also great, because that's exactly what I would be doing if I went back, so it really gave you a good taste of which you definitely need because people see the money and think oh, yeah, I can do that and it’s a lot more than that.

DT: So did the phone ring. Were you, did you have any sort of challenging situations to deal with?

P12: Oh god, yeah, (pause) I had, I had one store without a store manager, which was really struggling, I was supposed to be going back into. So I’d just come out of store for my Christmas project and I was supposed to be going back into one of the stores I'd already trained in, to train as an assistant manager. So I hadn't done that yet. And my mentor rang me and was like, look, store 32 manager is off sick, he's broken his arm. They don't have a store manager and they've only got one assistant manager, which is just unheard of, like most places have like five, it was a small store. It was a hard store, a really old store. It's not the nicest and the team, the dynamic that was just, this was the hardest store I've worked in. And he was like, Can you go in and help down for three weeks? And I was like, yeah, course. And that was so hard, because I hadn't even trained as an assistant manager yet, let alone an acting store manager. And (pause) not only did I not know the processes, like I'd never made a rota before. I didn't really know how (pause) to lead a team to the extent that I, a store manager would, i would like, everything I've done so far, you'd come in, and they'd be like, okay, you're either running this shift, or you're not. So if you're running the shift, you don't do anything specific, you sort of oversee and delegate, or you come in and they'll say, okay, you're on specials today, you have to do everything at once in that store. And I remember being sat down with Dan, and he was like, you didn't, like the bread needed changing today, like it was out of stock, and you didn't top it up. And I was like, I was doing specials, he's like that you should be watching both. And I was like, how on earth can I have, how can I be in the warehouse and on the shop floor at the same time? And it is just that you don't need to do everything yourself, I should have been relying on others be asking them to go and check things. And it's just, yeah, so much that you think I could definitely do that and that seems really easy until you're doing it and it's not easy (really quietly).

DT: And do you find it easier to delegate now?

P12: Yeah, definitely. I think, it wasn't so much that I didn't have the confidence to delegate in that I wouldn't feel comfortable asking people it's that I wouldn't feel comfortable asking them because I'd rather do it myself. And that's really bad. I feel like that comes from. I mean, you'll know all too well. People tend to take businesses a degree when they don't know what they want to do and that often leads to them not wanting to do at all. Yeah, so in group work, I'm just so like, guarded and I won't share anything, because I'm not risking my grade on other people that don't want anything that sounds really bad. But I almost took that into work as well, which was almost a bit damaging in that I would try and do everything myself, and then not be able to get it all done or not be able to get it done as well as I possibly could, if I just given some other people some responsibility. So that's definitely something I've learned is just to trust in others capabilities. Because it's not like you're in first year of uni where people don't care, people were here because they got the job to and they get it they do. So yeah, definitely got better.

DT: Yeah. Good. Do you think, did the culture change across stores? So whether staff very different or did it feel, where everybody happy to work in the company? What was the sort of atmosphere?

P12: It did sort of change? It was really weird, umm in that, like, I don't know if you'll know, XXX just down the road and that was my first in store time. That was horrible. They were so hard on me, they were like work this pallet in 20 minutes, and another staff member were like, I can't do that and they were like, tough she is. And that was very, the oldest store in our region. The managers now left because it just wasn't working, people didn't want to come to work. I then felt like I didn't want to come to work because Is this what working in XXX is like, because it was not fun. You'd be clock watching (pause) or because you can't wait to get home, but at the same time, you wouldn't have time to look at the clock, because you're literally being so you never stopped. And then I went to work in one of the brand new XXX stores with a new team of one of the best managers I've ever met, which changed everything. His team was so happy to come to work. He didn't need to be watching over their shoulder for them to get the job done because they were doing it because they didn't want to let anybody down. Because they wanted to work hard and do well. And yeah, it can completely changed my like, perspective, I wouldn't want to drive to a store that was five minutes down the road. Because I wouldn't want to work there. But I would quite happily drive an hour to another store and take 13 hours out of my day, because I enjoy being there. Yes. So yeah. Yeah.

DT: Well that’s a good lesson to learn, isn't it in terms of how do you motivate people? Do you, you had your mentor, do you think you had any other sort of role models, people you looked up to and felt that you learned things for?

P12: Yeah, umm, Pat was my mentor, was quite good in that he, he was like, I think my way of doing things is good and I want you to take things from that. But also, other people do things differently. And I want you to spend time with other people to develop your own way of doing things. So umm, I spent a few weeks shadowing other mentors, which was brilliant, because I did learn different things, ways of doing things, some things that were better than Pat’s way, in my opinion, some things that other people haven't performed. But that was really nice just to see just how diverse it is. So other area managers that I spent time with, that I learned things from, umm even down to different interview techniques. Really interesting and being able to hold interviews myself. And then umm the directors as well. We've got one store ops director who's also from Scotland from Australia. And I think he could run the whole company. He's just one of the one of those people I've ever met. He's just absolutely brilliant. So yeah, quite a few. Yeah.

DT: That's good. And you mentioned the umm project, you know, inventory. I was thinking utility. The inventory project, what else would you say is the contribution you've made? Or what do you feel you’ve sort of done over your placement year? (pause) I mean, that was quite big anyway.

P12: Yeah. Well, I mean, the Christmas project was good. We got all of the stock in a week earlier than the year before. So that that was that helped the stores out. I don't know. I mean, I was, I done well, in my role was like in my shadowing and my mentoring as an area manager. So that was good. And spent quite a lot of time with other area managers in training who were in their first year and umm in some respects, because you do things in a slightly different timeline. There were things they've done that I didn't know. And I was able to help them as well. So that wasn't good. Other than that I don't really know.

DT: Did you feel valued?

P12: massively? Yeah, yeah. But I think that also came (pause) from me putting myself out there. That'd be quite a lot of times where I'd be speaking to area managers and training or area managers in general and I'd say all me, Rosie, and Josie, and they'd be like, who are they? And they're the other students, that I mean, a lot of that comes from us being up at Christmas and they weren't that ,we had a very different year, which is a real shame. Like Rosie, I love her to pieces, and she would be brilliant, but she does not want to come back. She hated it and that was such, so contrasting for me, because I'm absolutely loved it and I felt so valued and she just felt like it was very commercial very (pause) the family came over from Germany, founders and umm she didn't know, she had plans that weekend and her mentor was that tough XXX before everything, like you're, the founders are coming to your work. And she was like, no, no I’m not. And she got she felt that from that day on her and her mentor never got on. Because Rosie personal view is that I have plans and that's more important to me than this in my first week on the job. I'm not bothered about whether they're coming or not. Whereas Laura’s outlook was this is huge and that should be more important and if you're not willing to put that before everything. I'm not willing to invest the time in you. (DT: Oh Okay , so, yeah, really funny people who sort of conform to their expectations). Yeah. Yeah. And it's Yeah, definitely and I don't think it's, it's not for everyone like, to me, that is completely acceptable. And, of course, that's something that they expect from us and I'm willing to do that. Whereas other people like Rosie, that isn't something that they're willing to put above other things. So it really is just, like I said earlier, they pay you a lot of money, but they expect a lot as well. And it isn't for everyone.

DT: No. So slightly marmitey

P12: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

DT: And do they have any mechanisms umm regarding excellent, you know, do they do things like employee of the month? Do they push excellence in everything they do? Sounds like a couple of things you've said such as the mentor system?

P12: They, probably they we have targets to hit. That it's almost that's I think that's one thing I really struggled with through uni and through everything I've done on Nando's is brilliant at this, if you do something well you're told, like, wow, you're great, well done, keep going. I'm used to having that praise and I'm the sort of person as confident as I seem, I need it. I'm very, like, worried that I'm not doing well enough. And they don't tell you that. If you don't get sacked, you're doing well. And that was I've really struggled with that the amount of times that Pat would be like you are doing well, like I've told you that like or I don't need to tell you that for you to know. And I was like I do need to know. And you don't get that at all that which I'm really struggled with. But umm (pause) yeah, it's sort of you don't get employee of the month or bonuses for hitting your targets. Your salary is huge. And if you hit your targets, you get your salary if you don't, you're not with the company anymore.

DT: Okay,

P12: which is quite savage.

DT: But I suppose as if you know that, you know, the expectations? And do you think they do enough in the sort of interview phase to help you understand that?

DT: Yeah, I think so from that outset. Even when you look online, it says like, something about it being really hard and are you ready to take it up a gear? And like, it's very from the beginning, this is hard. And we know you've heard it's hard, but it's really hard to are you going to be able to do it? Like I said to you about the group assessment, even there, I was bricking it. Because it is from the outset made to feel like, this is not a normal environment. And it's really challenging. So, but even so there's so many even when I was there, we have so many people that have been there three months, even a year or three weeks, and they'd be like, I can't do this anymore. And they just quit. It's so common. They have it all the time. Because people look at it, and they think I could do it. So maybe there isn't enough. Or maybe people just see the money and think can't be that hard.

DT: Or they think when people say is hard. They think oh, it's a little bit hard. They don't understand how hard it is.

P12: Yeah, yeah. But I think again, that is just different people like, obviously, the XX programme is nowhere near as hard as the grand scheme. But I haven't found this year that difficult. So maybe that is just because luckily for me, I'm quite suited to the company. Whereas I go home and talk to Greg, my boyfriend about it and he's like, screw that for a laugh like. Absolutely not a chance he is not for him at all. So maybe it's just you need to be Yeah, a certain type, which is the same for every job.

DT: Yeah. So um, oh, if you could change one thing about your placement, what would it be?

P12: (long pause) God, and I know I said, we spent like, a lot of time together. But I think that was me and the IPS. I think that was more on us and a lot more towards the end of the year when we were at the head office together. But it's very lonely area, like being an area manager, you are part of an area manager team. But you're also pegged against each other. It's a very lonely job, you could quite easily go without seeing anybody, like you see your stores and your subordinates, but without seeing anybody else for weeks at a time. And from the very outset, Pat was like you are not all going to get it, you are not all going to get this job at the end of it. And it's going to be you, you're going to get it. So it was very competitive. I remember putting in our group chat, like I've had a really hard day today, guys, like, I completely mess this up. And expecting people to be like, don't worry, we've been there. And they sort of replied like oh really and I was like, Oh my god, I'm really bad. And actually towards the end of the year found out they were all massively struggling. And none of us felt like we could tell each other. And the area manager team have a lot of days out and team building things that we would never involved in. So unless, like me, I went out of my way was forced out of my way to speak to the teams, the others didn't. And they didn't even know who the area managers were, we were calling them to ask them things and they'd be like, sorry, who are you? And that was horrible. Like, they should know who we are like we’re new, they should be making us feel included. And I definitely feel like they could they could change and work on that we should have spent a lot more time together because we didn't feel like allies at all.

DT: Okay. Do you think that's deliberate or just a miss?

P12: I think it is, in some senses that it is competitive. You're not all going to get it and it is an individual job. It's they do have very strong German roots that you you play hard, but you work harder, yes. And is an individual job, like you don't have three area managers for one area for a reason and you need to be able to work on your own and be able to achieve everything on your own. But I wouldn't say this deliberate in the sense that, aww I don't know. I don't know it, I was made to feel like it was quite a competition whereas others said that, that mentors never made them feel like that. So I think company wide, it's not incredibly deliberate to make you feel on your own and it is to test you.

DT: So I'm actually you know, my studies about psychological ownership. What does ownership in the workplace mean to you?

P12: Owww (long pause) In the sense of like, I don't know, tell me if I’ve misinterpreted the question,

DT: I'm deliberately leaving this quite vague,

P12: okay, umm I take ownership of like my work and the things that I umm can do that I can like influence and being able to achieve them. So like umm in this job role, for example, I'd say I'd not have ownership over my stores, but over our targets. Yeah. And umm, I'm not sure what that sounds quite like, I don't say ownership over my team. I don't own them, but I feel responsible for them.

DT: Okay. Could you have ownership as a collective group in the store?

P12: I could with my team, my like my store team, like me, and my store manager, and our team would have ownership over everything we do in the store. And I think that's important, because I'm not there all the time. I just pop in and see how they're doing. Umm, but not really across the area manager team, you can over certain things like you all have the same targets to hit, but you wouldn't hit them together.

DT: Okay, so do you think ownership is in terms of getting things done? Is that how you view it? Or responsibility?

P12: Yeah, I think so.

DT: Yeah. Yeah. There's no right or wrong answer. Don't worry.

P12: No, that's stumped me that because that is I feel like I don't know what I would want to that.

DT: Do you think you could feel ownership for the company?

P12: Yeah, I think so. I'm very, I've been with Nando's for five years. I won’t shop at XXX and everybody's like, why? And that really bothers me. My mom, my mom shops at XXX and we just had an XXX open down the road and I'm not there's no excuse now. And I am. I feel very, I'm quite loyal to my workplace. And like I said earlier about the owners coming over, like, drop everything for it. Because I feel like, I don't know, might not be the right thing to do. But personally, I sort of, if I'm coming something, I'm committing everything to it. So yeah, I definitely think personally, I feel ownership over it.

DT: Yeah. So you've sort of feel that connection? And that you identify with the company,

P12: Umm, I think so,

DT: do you do you think you sort of felt any identification with say your mentor? Or do you feel it stronger with the company rather than individually? individuals?

P12: Umm (long pause) I think more with the company than individuals. I don't know why. I we did get along really well. And especially towards the end. But I suppose I don't know whether that's because that's constant. Like my mentor will change, the people I work with is different stores will change. But the one thing that we've always got is that we work for XXX. Yes. So our views, sort like towards like the way I might work with one mentor would be different to the way I'd work with another. But we still work for XXX under the same values sort of thing. So I suppose that might be why.

DT: Yeah. Yeah. Not probably made sense. And can you think of any examples when you've sort of demonstrated ownership? I suppose one might have been the weekend with the when the owners came over? Did you already have plans or

P12: Oh, no, I am. I hadn't didn't over haven't started that. But I knew nothing about that. So I don't know whether they were going to Kingston lucked out. I think they were going into their store. But no, I didn't even know they were going.

DT: Yeah, so have you felt in your job role? Was there a time period, where you have done anything that you felt felt like you've owned that?

P12: Definitely the guide and taking that out to stores? Yeah, I felt very like wow, this is this is ours. And actually like people are saying it's really good. So yeah, we want to own that, umm, I also felt, I think, I don't know, suppose, this is it. But I did, we do store walks with our store managers. So when we go in will walk around the store and highlight things that are wrong. And umm, I've never actually done one I've seen a lot being done. But I did my first one with the assistant store manager and I'd been on one with a store ops director, so I know what they were looking for and it's pointing stuff out and I felt like I was being I said, Tim, I'm sorry, I'm being so like pernickety, but this is what they'll be looking for. He's like, no, don't be sorry, this will be your job one day. And I think that was the first point. I was like, Oh my god, I could do it. Like, this is actually what I would be doing and I'm going to, I want to do this job. Yeah. I think I can do it and yeah, I felt really like I suppose I felt like I owned it. I suppose ownership over the company is a bit like i don't i don't think i own XXX, but I was like this is gonna be mine.

DT: Yeah, absolutely. Yes, definitely. Good point. How many months had you been there?

P12: When was this? I think this was in February.

DT: So five months?

P12: Yeah. And I mean, I felt like quietly confident that I could do it until up until then and already knew that I loved it. Yeah. But it was really at that point that I was sort of like this is definitely I think what I want to do and yeah, I feel like I could do it. Yeah.

DT: Yeah. Nice to have those feelings.

P12: Yeah. Yeah.

DT: Final couple of questions. So do you think there can be any negative sides to ownership?

P12: Yeah. In the respect that I see it anyway, for my personal. Because I feel like I'm very (long pause), you know, I just probably one of my downside is that if we were to go somewhere, I always want to be in charge. I'm quite a good leader. But that can also be a negative in the sense that, like I said earlier, when you're in first year and nobody else wants to take the lead. Fine. Yeah. But in this job role everybody else has got the job, because they're all perfectly capable. So when you're with four people that are also very capable of running something, you can't run it with the time and you probably shouldn't run it all the time. Yeah. So that's probably (pause) I'm just too passionate. I need to just step back, just step back a little, but I don't think it's a bad thing to have ownership. I really know. But maybe not as much as I do (laughs).

DT: So is it too much control sometimes?

P12:I think so. But I think like I said, I've definitely got better at that. But I didn't the inventory project with Tom. And he'd be writing something and I've just been looking at it. Like, we can't put that like, that's not okay. And I've changed it. And I sort of think like to an extent in some some respects. In some scenarios, that was the right thing to do. But also, like he is capable and I, I don't need to be in control of everything. Yeah. And I should have stepped back and actually doing that project with him was the real turning point for me where I realised actually, there was so many things that were like numerical, an Excel spreadsheets that he was absolutely brilliant at, that I probably couldn't have done as well without him. So being able to appreciate others can actually be beneficial for you as well. Yeah. I said I’ve got better at that, I hope.

DT: when somebody else leads a situation, how does that make you feel?

P12: (long pause) ummm, I'm different in the sense that, I'm I don't know whether this is just because I felt so much like we were pegged against each other and we hadn’t got the job yet. So it was so competitive. But if it was my mentor, or even a store assistant, but I hadn't done it yet. And I didn't know what I was doing. Or a store obstructed teaching us something absolutely fine. Like I was really happy to sit back and learn about it. If there was an opportunity that it was me, or one of my peers on the same level to do something, and it wasn't me doing it, then I'd feel like, aww I don't know. Is there something like, I could probably do that better. So should I be doing it? But I think that was more a fear of a I knew we were always being watched. And I didn't really want anybody else to look better, there was only four of us. And it was sort of like one of us going to get it. Yeah. So and you didn't get a lot of time with the people that were going to make these influential decisions. So we were always I think subconsciously, like you're in a conversation, and you can't just have a chat, because you'll have what can I say that they'd want to hear? So?

DT: Yeah, okay. Interesting. And so do you think you felt ownership previously Say it Nando's?

P12: Yeah, I think so. (pause) definately

DT: Do you think you feel it for your university work as well?

P12: Yeah, I think so. I feel quite proud of the work I do and also, you know, when you've got like, friends that like you'll do group work with, like me and Sophia would do group work together all of the time. And that's amazing, because we both help each other. And then you've got other friends in your seminar group. So could you just send me that? No, no, no, no, I've worked so hard. There was my baby. You can't copy it. You can't have it. So I suppose Yeah, in the sense that like, when you know, you're equally contributing to something. I want to help Sophia and Sophia wants to help me And together, we could probably do something better. But when you've worked so hard on something, and somebody just wants to take credit for this, then I'm very protective.

DT: Yeah, I can understand that. Yeah. And so in terms of graduate yet, after you graduate, so they've offered you a role

P12: If I get a 2:1

DT: which of course you will do. So do you think you'll take it?

P12: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. I haven't even thought about what else I would want to do, even if I was to start looking because I can't really see myself anywhere else now. I don't like, even just from the amount of responsibility you get, like Sophie has been a placement with XXX for the year. And I'm sure that there's brilliant placements here. But she like I would call her and I'd be all I'm really sorry. I'm just in Chippenham running the area, like, Can I give you a call back later? And she'd be like upside ask. And I don't have any responsibility, like, how are we? How am I here? And how are you there? And I just think I'm couldn’t now, having been given this much responsibility, imagine myself somewhere where I don't have it. You know, I was told IBM, I can’t remember the phrase they use, but it's like a bull pen or something where basically it was sort of like, everyone was one level, there were so many grads, and to try and get up from there was just impossible. Whereas at XXX you sort of told you're on track to be a director in five years. So now I've sort of been given the opportunity to have those things. Yes, I can't imagine not.