

**Thank you for talking to me. Just for the tape can you say that you're happy for me to record this, please?**

**Participant 19**

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Yes, that's fine, yeah.

**Lovely. Thank you. Can I take you back to the second year and your placement search. So can you tell me a bit about the process that you went through applying to any companies you applied to, and how you ended up where you did?**

Yes, I applied to about 40 different companies - I heard back from probably 12 of them. I aimed my search for companies that I thought had strong ideas for the future, and also already established so I knew that I would be able to have a nice position within the company. The processes, the ones that I heard back, I got through to all interviews and tests. I managed to get to the final round in Rolls Royce and then I also got the Unilever Assessment Centre and I got the XXX obviously, Assessment Centre, which is the one that I chose in the end.

**Wonderful. So quite a lot of companies not responding, which is horrible…**

Yeah, I know. I mean, that was the one thing that really put me down, the fact that they couldn't even bother just to even copy and paste the same email to everyone. Because I was sat waiting which is worse than them saying no.

**Yeah, I can understand that frustration. Did you have to go through an Assessment Centre with XXX?**

Yes, I did, yeah. So my process at XXX was an online test, followed by a video interview and then I came for my Assessment Centre which compiled of three more interviews and then two presentations.

**Okay. And after the Assessment Centre, is that when you found out or was there another stage?**

No, so they rang me a week later and said that I'd been offered the position.

**Wonderful. So when you came out of the Assessment Centre, how did you feel about the job role, the company?**

Really excited. I felt, especially because I'd done Unilever before it and I could tell straight away the difference in culture and environment, even just from the way that we were tested. I felt that Unilever, we were handed, it was a ridiculous booklet, 50 pages, and they kind of said you’ve got five minutes, they didn’t tell us what we were looking for and after that they were like, it was basically just memory-retention, whereas here they actually gave us questions which applied to the field that we would be working in, the questions were real life examples from previous interns and so it really gave us a feel for what we were going to be doing, rather than just feeling like we were just cramming information.

**Yeah, excellent. And when did you find your placement – what month was that in?**

So, I had my Assessment Centre in March, I think it was, and I found out a week later and I started in June.

**And was there any contact between March and June, other than the sort of, contracts?**

No. It was pretty quiet.

**Okay. And so, what did you do on your first week at the company? Was there an informal induction?**

Yeah, so there was two full days of basically just back to back presentations about safety and privacy and cadence and all these kinds of things. And then the other three days of the week was me, my Line Manager giving me a folder filled with just important information, so basic product stats and essential information for me, because I couldn't be working on strategy for things I didn’t know, so I had to learn everything first.

**Yeah. Were there many other interns joined at the same time? Are you part of a bigger program?**

Yeah, so for the commercial interns, there are four of us in total, and then there is nine engineering interns, so there are 13 of us in total.

**Okay. And did you get to meet any of the more senior people in the company that week or did that come later?**

Yeah, so, up until … so the lines of authority are pretty straight and everybody has… Sorry, I just have to move meeting rooms, I was in the wrong room…

**Oh okay. No worries.**

**Hello? I may have lost you again.**

***[Okay, just for the tape I may have lost the participant so I’ll stop the tape now and we will start again when we manage to connect again.]***

Right, I can hear you.

**Cool, I’ll just put the tape back on.**

Sorry about that.

**That’s okay, no worries at all. So you were just talking about something about the hierarchy? Can you hear me?**

Yeah, I can…

**You keep on disappearing.**

***[Silence]***

**Hello?**

**Okay, here we go again. So you were telling me about the hierarchy…**

Yes. So, they're pretty direct lines – everyone has their own individual Manager, who they have weekly to bi-weekly catch ups with, so in my first week I was able to meet with my Line Manager’s Manager, who is the Global Director of the category I was working in. And I had the opportunity to present to her and my entire team a few times in the first month. Since then, I've had the opportunity to work very closely with **[00:07:00]** and been given the opportunity to present to some of the **[00:07:08]** officers as well. So I've had a really good opportunity **[00:07:12]** up in the ranks.

**Yeah, sounds fantastic. So, I know you can't tell me too much about your job role, but can you sort of, give us a general overview of what you have to do without giving too many details away?**

Yeah, so I've just rotated teams, so how XXX do their intern grad schemes is that you move teams every six months to ensure that you get the best experience possible and from their point of view, when you come back, you have already got all of that experience and you're not kind of just in one area, you appreciate the whole business and it will help them in the long run. So my first role that I completed, which I finished in January, was the Environmental Care Team. so I was working with the purifiers and the heaters and my main role was Market Support so I was the lead support for Europe and Middle East and Africa. I was helping them out with their campaign activations, global strategies and any ad hoc tasks in between where they might need my approval for new assets coming through and things like that. And on top of that was the main bulk of **[00:08:24]** but then around that I had a few projects that I started for myself and my team were very supportive of me doing, so I led the development of monthly retail landscape reports across all of those countries. I led the development of our social media strategy for the category. And then outside of that, I'd been helping out with the Early Careers Hub, which is essentially like a XXX Union, I suppose it could be called. And then other, just tasks in between where people just need help with other things. And my new role, I'm now in the Group Global Social Media Teams and I help out over all platforms in countries with their strategies going out and the bigger side of my new role is data reporting so I am looking at how content is performing online and also the larger part is also looking at what people are saying so the big thing I am doing at the minute is with sustainability, so I'm understanding about what people are saying about us and how that's changing as we are trying to combat our sustainability stance.

**Okay, interesting. So it sounds as though the role is quite involved, do you feel that you have very much autonomy or is there quite a lot of structure, you're told what to do on a day to day basis?**

No, it’s very much, you kind of get given your mission, or find some missions as I've done in my previous role, and then kind of see it to the deadline, I guess. There's not really a … unless I wanted to, there's not really check-ups and things like that, it’s very much drive your own success, I think is the best way of saying it.

**How have you found the change to a new team? Because sometimes I know students feel they just get comfortable in one area and you move somewhere else? You're smiling at that…**

I mean, yeah, six months I got pretty comfy, I learnt all of the lingo and all of the different things, and then straight back to stage one again, but I mean, it’s fine. I think it’s great because then I've got basically two different jobs and loads of different experience. I mean, yeah, I'm very happy with it, but it’s a bit of a kick in the teeth just getting comfy and then having to re-learn everything again.

**Keeping you on your toes!**

Yeah, exactly.

**And do you feel that you’ve had an opportunity to improve processes, put your own mark on some things?**

Definitely, yeah. I think that is the great thing about this company. I think it could be attributed to the fact that it is still family run, so there's no board of directors, you have to go through, it’s very much… If you have an opinion or an idea, people listen to you and you're very pushed until you can try your ideas. So I started a campaign with some data earlier on, which has turned into a lasting thing so that's going to be something that, when I leave the company, globally, markets will be using every day. So I think the fact that I've left something behind which is going to be **[00:11:38]** the business continually, is really nice for me, I think.

**Yeah, absolutely. That sounds fantastic. Have your feelings changed about the company over the time period?**

Erm, no, I think actually it has stayed completely consistent from the outset, because everybody … in my first three months I was meeting, I kind of took it upon myself to meet at least one person a week, just have a coffee and a chat, and then every chat I'd say, can you suggest me two more people and from there I just built a network and everyone that I spoke to would always give me the same kind of opinions of the company, you know? It’s an informal structure - there's no dress codes, it’s very laid back, but you're there for a reason – you're expected to perform. I think it’s really great but opinions haven’t actually changed, which is nice, because I feel like, sometimes you might be led into a false sense of security at the start and they're being overly nice and things, but they stayed consistent the whole way through so far.

**Excellent. And it sounds like you’ve had a fantastic opportunity – do you think you’ve developed and improved on any skills?**

Yeah, I think everything. Because especially my first week in, my Line Manager was on holiday for three weeks so I was the lead for all of the markets and all of the strategy for those three weeks, and I said to her, would it be possible for one of the team members to look over me for that time and she actually said, no, I'd much rather you jump in at the deep end, learn the hard way, and then going forwards you'll benefit. So just from that, I've learnt communication skills because I had to lead weekly calls with all of the market managers, organisation because I had to juggle all these things whilst she was away. I think pretty much most of my skills have been developed because it’s so much different learning something in a classroom and then actually applying it and having tangible outcomes. It’s so different, but yeah, no, I think I've learnt so much really.

**And being thrown in at the deep end like that, some students could have found quite challenging, but it sounds like you just took it on?**

Yeah, it was scary especially the first few calls and things, because you know, I had sat in a couple of calls so I knew roughly the structure that is… Yeah, it was scary but it was one of those things that I felt … I am appreciative of it now because I feel like that's why I've managed to learn so quickly.

**Would you say your confidence has improved during the six months as well?**

Definitely yeah. I mean, the thing that has made it go up the most is presenting because I didn’t really … I really didn’t like presenting in our seminars and things like that, but when I'm here doing our weekly presentations to groups of 12-15 people, it kind of is not so bad now, I guess. I think also the fact that they're all actively listening, taking notes, I'm actually creating content, I feel like my content **[00:14:47]** actually seeing work that is good and people are really thankful of the work that I'm doing, which is nice.

**That is really nice, and actually I was going to ask you if members, team members and other people within the company value students…**

Yeah.

**…and it does sound like it?**

Yeah, we are not viewed as students at all. We are all viewed as employees and we all have an equal voice in the room.

**Excellent. Does the company have any sort of schemes in place to show how they value people? An Employee of the Month award would be a sort of example of that?**

I don’t know about other areas of the business but commercial specifically, each month, we have a commercial breakfast where everyone in the commercial department meets in a room and we have our Chief Commercial Officer present and at the end of those meetings, we have Commercial Awards, so people get nominated from teams and then the Officer will pick what he feels was the greatest impact on the business, and then those people get certificates for that month.

**Excellent. That sounds like a good scheme. Have you won any yet?**

I haven’t, no.

**Something to work towards?!**

Yeah. I think a lot of them fall to employees because it normally comes after really long pieces of work where there's been problems persisting, but I don’t know about other areas, that's only commercial I can speak for.

**Yeah. Absolutely. When you leave your placement, obviously you’ve mentioned one piece of work which will still be in operation, is there anything else that you feel at this stage, when I leave I will be really proud to leave that behind?**

So yeah, the data piece is definitely the biggest thing that I'm proud of at the minute. The monthly retail landscape reports that I was leading will be carrying on, so every month, my Manager and then the few people above her will have awareness of the best markets, the best retailers in those markets, the best products in those markets and how that develops each month, so they now have a much clearer picture of their financial … the retail landscape, sorry, going forwards. And then also, from my new position, I haven’t started the project yet but I will be project managing the re-design and strategy of Pinterest, because we don’t really do much on there, so that will stay behind as well, that will be the strategy going forwards for that social channel.

**Okay. Excellent. Sounds really good. So, if you could change one thing about your placement, what would that be?**

It’s not so much about the company, it’s … the one thing that I always say to that question is the location because it’s based in Malmesbury, so, I have to get an hour coach in the morning, so it means I'm waking up at 6 o’clock – it’s not really that bad but by the time I get home it’s 6 o’clock, so it’s a 6 till 6 day, and I feel like… That would be the one thing I would change, just having it that bit closer, because then I get more of a chance to just … the work/life balance is fine, I never have to work at home but it would just be nice with a bit more time to just completely relax and…

**Yeah, I can understand that one; that's a long commute, so yeah, frustrating. So as you know my study is about psychological ownership, and I wondered what ownership in the workplace means to you?**

I feel like ownership … … the most important one is responsibility - responsibility for mistakes, even more so. It’s such – I can't think of the word; non-blame culture – I can't think of the word. Nobody will point fingers, it’s just about … the biggest thing about owning the project is the people above you knowing that if something goes wrong, they will know straight away, and you won't let it progress. But I mean, it all just ties into the fact that we are treated as employees, so we are given projects to lead and we are not checked in on unless we want to be. I think that's what ownership is to me – having the confidence to know that people believe in you, is the biggest thing for me and then them trusting that you're going to produce content that will help them.

**Yes, absolutely. And have you got any examples of when you’ve shown ownership?**

Yes, I had done a project which … so I have to cut the story, but I had done a project for a country and it was brand new for that country, and there was slightly complications on the details and if that had gone forwards we could have faced legal complications. So I had to bring it up with my Manager straight away and I came into a meeting with her Manager, and we’d resolved the issue by the end of the week, and that project is now a success. So, from my point of view, I think that is an example of where, if I had been too scared to come and fess up to the problem, I could have been in so much more trouble if the company had faced legal issues.

**Yeah, absolutely. Do you feel ownership for the company and the job role or one or the other?**

I think I feel ownership for both. I think they’ve … it’s weird, I don’t know when it happened, but whenever I'm doing my … you just feel like, I think what it is, is the way we are treated as employees, it makes it feel like it’s my business as well. So when I'm thinking of the outcomes, I'm thinking of the business as well. So it’s not just about me keeping my position, it’s about me benefitting the company.

**And I was going to ask you when you started having these feelings, can you think roughly?**

I think it must have been a month or a few months in. As soon as I got my feet, found what I was doing and started leading my own projects was probably when it started to kick in that, you know, I'm not just here as cheap labour…

**Yeah, you have a real job, real responsibility?**

Yeah.

**Some other students have talked about other ownership that they feel, such as ownership for their career, and I wondered if that's something you’ve ever felt, or considered?**

Well, we are always kind of, well me and two other interns, we are always thinking about how our work is going to contribute to us getting back on the grad scheme, and I think that ties into my career ownership and the fact that at the end of these 12 months, we are given the opportunity to do a 10 minute presentation to the Commercial Officer to say how we impacted the business in the last 12 months and then from that we will either get the yes or the no to come back, post-uni for two years. And I think that's definitely of owning my career, is the fact that I have … which is why I'm picking up these extra tasks, because I have the ability to try and find myself new jobs to show how I've done this year and how that can help bring me back for the grad scheme. So that is essentially my goal – to come back for the grad scheme, because that would be four more jobs with experience, one of which being abroad for six months, so I feel that would really put me in great stead for my career going forwards.

**Absolutely, sounds like a fantastic opportunity. What do you think are the positives and the negatives of feeling ownership?**

The positives is definitely going back to the thing that I said before about having the confidence in yourself. Having ownership or being given ownership shows that you must have some level of skill or trust. And I think also, negatives would be having that trust puts a weight on your shoulders, which isn't necessarily a negative but it’s always at the back of your mind, I don’t want to let these people down, they’ve given me this much responsibility, there's this much money on the line, so there's definitely a level of stress there but, we have on site mental health nurses and they have loads of things going on… I mean, the negatives are really actively combatted here. We have monthly surveys for employee satisfaction and they are really actively working to get the – I can't think of the right word – the promotor score up.

**And to ensure that everybody’s wellbeing is where it should be?**

Yeah, everyone being well, yeah.

**Oh well, that’s good they do that as well. Do you think you’ve felt ownership before? So maybe at university, part time job, a hobby?**

Yeah, I think I have. The only reason that it’s hit me more is the level. So I've always had responsibility with my other jobs and things, and kind of responsibility of just myself at uni and having the responsibility to do the work and actually have in my mindset, that it’s fine to have fun, but I actually want to get somewhere after the fun. So it’s **[00:24:20]** my future is always there, I think is one of them.

**Excellent, good. And so, you're talking about ideally coming back on the grad scheme, if worst case, it didn’t happen, what sort of other organisations would you look at?**

I would probably look at Nike, just because it has, from what I have heard from people that have come from there, a similar culture, but different industry. So, it would be interesting how I could bring my experience over to there. But also, I might just not do one, is my other thing, and my long term goal is to have my own marketing agency, so I've started doing freelance work for local companies and things, so if I didn’t get it, then there is the opportunity that I do just try and start my own company straight away.

**Absolutely. So what do you think is the biggest thing you'll take away from XXX?**

Erm… Biggest thing? I think the biggest thing would probably be the fact that… My personality change would be the biggest thing. I think its going to be so weird me going back to uni now, having, being in this scenario. I think my whole work ethos has been absolutely changed because before this, I'd always seen, not something to dread or boring, but I've always seen work as kind of a chore, but now I've had the opportunity to do things like I've done here, I'm really … it’s given me the motivation to properly work for it and I think that that's the biggest thing – the motivation that it’s given me.

**Excellent, it sounds like you’ve had a really positive experience and so it really is going to potentially set you up in the future, which is fantastic.**

Yeah, exactly.

**Brilliant, well, that's all of my questions, so let me just turn off the tape.**

*[End of Transcription 00:26:27]*