

Aim Higher - Oliver Hollick

Schools: Cronehills Primary School and Wodensborough Technology College

College: Matthew Boulton College - AVCE and HNC in Business and Finance

University: Staffordshire University - Business Management BA (Hons)

Background

When I first went to secondary school I was fairly quiet and didn't enjoy it. The step from primary to secondary was a big deal for me as only one of my friends was going to the same school but it was an opportunity to make new friends. One major thing that hit me was homework. I never had any homework from primary school and when it came at secondary school I found it hard to cope with.

Eventually I adjusted to secondary school life and become more confident. During year 7 everything was new and it was important for me to get all my work done and try and do well. Towards the end of year 8 and all of year 9 I became a bit of a tear away and getting my work done was not as important to me compared with playing football and having a laugh. This attitude was shown in my SATs results in year 9 as I didn't do too well.

When it came to options I knew I was interested in business so chose this along with media and IT. Going into year 10 I was disappointed with my SATs and thought it was about time I started to concentrate on my work. I still had a laugh but getting good grades became more important to me.

The way I perceived life after school was going to college, maybe university and then work. I didn't want to do what I classed as the 'norm' as I wanted to go straight into work but study at the same time. From talking with a careers adviser I knew that an apprenticeship was the best option for me.

In year 11 I went on work experience at MG Rover. Whilst there I learnt about their apprenticeship scheme in business and I decided that this was what I wanted to do. I was interested in business but did not know what area of business I wanted to focus my career in. The scheme at MG Rover was good as it would give me the opportunity to experience all areas of the business whilst studying and at the end of my studies I would decide where I wanted to focus the rest of my career. To get onto that scheme I needed to achieve good grades and it was at this point I knuckled down to do my very best.

I applied for the MG Rover scheme during the middle of year 11 and after a grueling interview process / assessment day I secured a place on the scheme. This was a provisional offer providing I got a minimum of 5 A-C's three of which had to be in English, Math's and Science.

When it came to sitting my GCSE's I was very nervous as I knew that how I performed in these could effectively change the course of how my life panned out. Prior to sitting my exams I tried to do as much revision as I could and completed numerous practice papers so I was happy and confident that I would do the best I could.

When it came to results day I was very nervous as I knew that this was the day that would decide whether I got onto the apprenticeship scheme. My alternative option was to seek other apprenticeships however I had not seen anything else that I really wanted to do and had all my hopes pinned on MG Rover. Me and my mates met up on results day and went in together to open our results to which I was delighted. I managed to get 8 GCSE's between A-C which meant I was accepted onto the MG Rover apprenticeship scheme.

Employment and Part Time Study

The following September I started with MG Rover where I was studying at college one day a week and working in the office the other four days. It was hard work balancing work and college but it was good because I was able to apply my academic studies with the projects I was doing at work and vice versa. Whilst in the office I would do various placements of 3-6 months. Placements included MG Sport and Racing where I was helping with the marketing for sports cars, Global Purchasing where I was helping buy materials from abroad and Production where I was learning how the cars were built on the assembly line. Towards the end of my third placement MG Rover went into administration and I was made redundant.

At the point when I lost my job I was studying my HNC in Business and Finance and really wanted to carry on studying and working at the same time. I managed to secure some temporary work at Matthew Boulton College but this was only in one department and I wanted to carry on my apprenticeship experiencing the different departments of a business. To pursue my ambition I began to write to the managing directors of large businesses in the Sandwell area where I thought there would be an opportunity for me to carry on my apprenticeship progressing on to a part time degree whilst working.

After a few interviews I joined Interserve Engineering Services Ltd based in West Bromwich who accepted my plea and kindly made provision for me to continue my apprenticeship and fund my degree. I joined Interserve in 2005 and I am still there now. I have completed my apprenticeship having experienced all the different departments including working on a construction site, finance, human resources, quantity surveying and I am now based in business development. I graduated from Staffordshire University in 2008 having completed my part time degree in Business Management.

Completing all my academic studies part time has been hard work as I was continually trying to balance work, studies and my social life.

I don't think I would go back and change anything that I have done however by doing a degree part time I missed out on the social side of university life and moving away from home etc. On the up side my degree has been paid for which means I have no debt and numerous years of work experience which will hopefully aid success in the future.

The Future

My ambition now is to continue to pursue a career in business development becoming more technically competent and hopefully achieve my MBA.