

## **Praise for the Graduate/Student books and Graduate Coach**

### **Companies**

#### ***Jeff Fugler – CEO – The Charlotte Street Agency***

“We have regularly taken on interns via Graduate Coach and have always found them to be of the highest standard. One advantage of hiring via Graduate Coach is that in every instance we have found them ready to hit the ground running. We have had no need to train them further. We have literally been able to throw them in the deep end.”

“The money we have saved as a business this way has been considerable, never mind the saving in time as well. We would have no hesitation in recommending their services to any parent or Graduate.”

“In fact, I have sent two graduates to them for Coaching, so impressed have I been with the quality of coaching they receive.”

#### ***Ben Norton – Commercial Director – ICP***

“I would have no hesitation in recommending Chris and Graduate Coach for any organisation.”

“Given a short lead time and a skeletal project outline Chris quickly provided two well-briefed young graduates that possessed the IQ/EQ you hope for. They and he were a pleasure to work with and I would have no hesitation in recommending Chris and Graduate Coach for any organisation seeking intelligent, capable and diligent interns – excellent service.”

#### ***Jeremy Prescott – Deputy Chairman 2112 Communications***

“I have known Chris as a business colleague and friend since 1976 when I joined what was then the best advertising agency in the UK – Collett Dickenson and Pearce (CDP).”

“Chris was my first manager there and I worked closely with him for the next twelve years. During that time (and since) he has always demonstrated many qualities. He is inspiring, diligent, clever, creative and very loyal to everyone with whom he works. Above all, he has extraordinary drive to succeed for himself and all his clients.”

“When my son needed mentoring because he had no idea what career he wished to pursue, I had no hesitation in asking Chris to help him. He suggested opportunities, coached him, helped him create an effective CV and helped him to get and prepare him for interviews, and finally helped land a really good job.”

“I heartily recommend Chris and Graduate Coach.”

## **Graduates**

### *Saul P*

"Following months of feeling lost and depressed about my future career prospects, meeting Chris was a turning point. He helped to identify my strengths and key personality traits which I, like most people of my age, was totally oblivious to."

"If you have recently started working or are stuck in your career, give the book a read: you'll be surprised by how helpful it will be."

### *Andrew B*

"Chris helped to transform my career and my life. Within a few hours of meeting him he'd identified the perfect-fit sector for me, and after a bit of CV and interview technique work I found a job in an industry I'd never have gone for myself. I made the jump from having a dead-end job as a waiter to working a full-time role in digital marketing in less than a month."

### *Simon*

"With his help I refined my interview skills"

"Chris is an excellent coach. Working with him was a real pleasure because I could sense his passion and enthusiasm for what he does. With his help I refined my interview skills and my first interview, after only one week with him, was a huge success. Due to his extensive work experience and unique insights in the field of marketing, he could give me a lot of good advice on how I can stay on top of my industry."

### *Susan*

"...the most helpful thing was the ability and confidence that I was given to answer the hundreds of competency questions that I encountered at phone interview, assessment days and final interviews."

### *Alex*

"I would recommend Graduate Coach to anyone looking to receive coaching as a graduate, something that is not easy to find, with such relevance and quality."

### *Emma J*

"Thanks to Chris' years of advertising experience... he was able to advise me on the best approach."

### *Alex A*

"Chris Davies is sparkingly intelligent, and sharply perceptive. He has a brilliant knack for understanding the talents and drives of others (which they themselves might not know) and the experience and know-how for getting that first foot in the door. I would urge anyone who is feeling lost since leaving education to pick up this book. You may be surprised at where it takes you."

# THE GRADUATE BOOK

AUSTIN  MACAULEY PUBLISHERS™  
LONDON • CAMBRIDGE • NEW YORK • SHARJAH

*For those wanting to create a successful future for themselves.*

# **THE GRADUATE BOOK**

**All you need to know to do  
really well at work**

**CHRIS DAVIES**  
**Graduate Coach**

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# Foreword

*Geoff Howard-Spink*

I got a call in July from Chris Davies. He asked if I would write an introduction to a book he was publishing.

We hadn't spoken for years. More like decades actually. I was intrigued. Flattered as well, and impressed by the fact that Chris had tracked me down. So I agreed. See Chapter 7 – The seventh key: Build networks and make friends.

Chris sent me the manuscript and I immediately saw that many of the Thirteen Keys matched my own working life experience.

My best boss was Stanley Pollit, founder of Boase Massimi Pollit. I worked at two legendary Advertising Agencies in succession: BMP followed by Collett Dickenson Pearce. Tick Keys 4 and 5.

Resilience is a quality that can be acquired. Had to be in my case. In advertising it's an essential survival skill. Just being smart and well prepared isn't always enough to prevail. Running marathons helped me. Tick Key 6 and maybe Key 8 as well.

I scraped a pass in O Level maths and got a degree in economics without ever understanding a formula. But I did get the significance of numbers. I learned that from Stanley Pollitt. Don't believe that the world now belongs to the

quants, but don't skip over the tables in a document either. Tick Key 9.

My first job was a trainee at Lintas. At the time it was Unilever's in-house agency. The nice ladies that looked after the trainees fixed me up with an elocution coach to iron out the north-west London accent. After the first session I agreed with the coach, an actor, that we'd spend the hour a week talking about films and skip the elocution bit. Tick Key 11.

Although In the mid-1960s when I was looking for my first job it was a lot easier than it is today, I suspect that the transition from education to paid employment was as difficult then as it is now.

I didn't have a coach like Chris to mentor and advise me. Such people didn't exist then. But what I can say is that my lived experience endorses what a graduate will find in this book.

# Preface

It has come as a complete joy to me to discover that coaching people is the very best job I have ever had. I had no idea when I started out as a young graduate trainee that trying to help other people would enthral me so much.

I have helped many people develop the skills and confidence they need to land really good jobs. I have learnt much along the way – and I am still learning – but one thing has become increasingly clear: it's great to help someone land a job, but then what? Where do you go from there?

That's why I felt the need to write a book. While there are hundreds of books and YouTube videos on how to get a job, there are few that guide you once you have one. And my intuition is that many of us would wish that we had such a guide, because the transition to work is often difficult. I was completely bewildered by it for at least the first year and frankly not much good to anyone during my second year.

Years later, I began to wonder why I was so useless in the beginning. Eventually I realised why: I had come from the usual school and university environment where people were paid to help me learn and develop. Then I was employed by a very large, successful and benevolent employer where I was largely expected to work out things for myself. I was suddenly on my own, with at least 10 problems a day to deal with and the same number of decisions to make.

Nowadays, nothing has changed. All employers pay lip service to the need to coach and mentor, and most will try to help, but bosses and leaders will always have their hands full. When I was running a company, I reckon that I had to make at least 15 decisions a day. Helping new hires (especially those fresh from university) is only – and will only ever be – a very small part of an employer’s daily preoccupation.

That is the reality of working life.

You will come to realise that you are now, for the first time in your life, completely responsible for you. There is nobody being paid to hold your hand to help you learn. You have to learn by yourself. You are the one person who will decide the long-term fate of your career.

Although I did have help from some great bosses, (and that will be a key message in this book – find a great boss) most of what I learnt along the way I did by myself, and always from making mistakes.

As this realisation began to take shape in my head, I began to imagine what would have happened to me if there had been a book I could have read to coach me. It would have been a much less bumpy ride for a start. I would have saved myself hundreds, possibly thousands, of hours of wasted effort. Therefore, this is my hope: that by reading this book you will save yourself a huge amount of time and wasted effort and will learn and keep learning faster and more productively. The mastery of any cognitively demanding job always is a long and sometimes arduous task. I also hope that by telling my story of how I made it (from very inauspicious beginnings) you will get to your ‘where you want to be’ more quickly and with much less trauma.

Nowadays, ‘going on a journey’ is a cliché, but in this context, it makes sense to use it. Your working life really will be a journey, and it will last at least 50 years.

People almost gasp when they first hear that, however, this is the average number of years a young adult is likely to work before they retire. People rarely think about it this way at the start of their working lives.

Given the length of time you will be working, if you can find work that fulfils you then that journey will be so much more enjoyable.

But what makes for fulfilling work? It is very simple: work where you are able to develop your skills. The continual acquisition and mastery of new, work-based skills (so different from those academic ones learnt at school and university) will also help you develop your self-esteem and mark your final accession to adulthood. That is the way to find fulfilment at work. In this book, we are going to look at what these skills are and how to develop them.

So enjoy! I hope you find the book interesting and, above all, useful.

**Chris Davies**

# Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to thank Kirsty Ellen Smillie and her team at Austin Macauley. They were the first publishers who said, "Yes, these two books work together and should be published as a pair".

Every other publisher thought I was crazy. Time will tell!

I also want to thank my best boss, Geoff Howard-Spink. It only really dawned me when I started coaching how lucky I was to have had such a great mentor.

He gave me my first break into Senior Management when he asked me to start a new advertising agency, CDP/Aspect, for Collet Dickerson and Pearce (CDP) when I was 27. His patience during that first traumatic year when we pitched 22 times and only won four accounts was nothing short of miraculous!

After that rocky start (it's described more fully in *The Graduate Book*) we went on to great things and the original band of six eventually became 150.

I will never forget those days; we were never the most talented bunch but we were one of the hardest working, and we always worked as a team. It is impossible to personally thank everyone but these folk were the backbone of the company – Barbara Harrison, Karen Pursey, Nick Mann, John Mundy, Robin Murtough, Jeremy Prescot, Mark Robinson and Douglas Seddon.

Since those advertising years, I have worked with many other talented people. Peter Gordon, Denise Roberts and David Taylor have been instrumental in the growth of Graduate Coach.

Carole Norris taught me so much especially about how to coach and how best to help students on the autistic spectrum.

In addition, I have asked for help from my mentoring team of Brian Berg, Jeff Fugler, Jeremy Prescott and Gary Trueman many times over the last seven years. They have been great cheerleaders for Graduate Coach, always encouraging me when times were tough, which they were in the early days.

These two books have been a team effort as well. Denise Roberts, Mike Everett and Bernadette Williams have helped me write them, Bridget Wilkins has been a very patient copy editor/proof reader and Ian Kingston has done a fine job on the book designs. Thanks also to Jeff Fugler and Jon White for their kind introductions and to John Mundy for his photography.

I need to thank Bruce Woodcock of the Careers and Employability team from the University of Kent for permission to adapt a number of charts from their careers website. It's an excellent free resource that any student can use. Data, charts and statistics from High Fliers Research have also been invaluable to this project.

Graduate Coach itself only exists because of all those clients who have put their faith in me. I owe them all so much.

I have learnt and am still learning so much about how best to help young people succeed in this very competitive world, and sometimes I feel that they are teaching me.

I learnt a lot in all those advertising years about how to sell products and at times it was very satisfying, especially when I was working for smaller brands who were up against big

corporations, but it's nothing like the feeling I get when somebody I have coached succeeds in landing a job.

It's certainly the best job I have ever had. And for that I am truly blessed.

Last but not least, I know I could never have succeeded in this and the other careers I have had over these past years without the unflagging support of my wife, Mariel.

When we first met, she was a successful young dentist and I was a struggling young advertising man. But she believed in me then as she believes in me now.

We all need someone we can lean on and I have always leant on her.

**Chris Davies**



# Introduction

## Starting Out

From my earliest days at school to the time I started work I felt intellectually inferior to my peers. Somehow, they appeared to be brighter, better educated and more articulate than I was. I found that the only way I could compete with them was to work harder.

But it was when I took up my first job that the need to work harder hit me hardest. In those days, the early seventies, advertising was a highly sought-after career and was therefore particularly adept at attracting the brightest minds. In the main, these brainboxes were recruited from Oxford and Cambridge. It astonished me how they were able to grasp complex ideas quickly, and explain them simply and succinctly.

I felt like a dunce in their presence.

However, as time went by, a change took place and I began to out-perform my peers. I didn't realise it at the time, but I'd discovered the art of working smarter. By adopting a specific set of actions, I was marshalling an arsenal of skills that were helping me to carve out a successful career. I was beginning to manage the transition from university to work. At the same time, I was future proofing my skills.

## How I progressed past my peers

My story begins in the spring of 1972. I was about to graduate but I was clueless as to what I wanted to do next. Despite having studied biology for three years, I knew I didn't want to be a biologist. I was fed up with the subject. On the other hand, I had enjoyed being a student leader for the university's Rag Week and had loved running the hall of residence's bar committee. I'd also had a ball when I was selected to become the first student representative on the university's board of governors. But still, I had no idea what to do as a career.

One day I got chatting to my next-door neighbour in halls. He was studying marketing and appeared never to work that hard. He lent me some of his textbooks. One weekend I settled down with one and read it from cover to cover. Boy, did it leave an impression. It's a book that I will always remember and it remains the definitive textbook in its field: *Kotler on Marketing*.

This book introduced me to a whole new world of brands and advertising. This world struck me as fascinating; perhaps more usefully, it seemed to me that it might be a world in which I could flourish. I had worked in shops since I was a kid, to top up my pocket money. Many of the strategies and tips offered by the book seemed to embody much of the common sense that the shopkeepers for whom I worked practised daily. Things like being mindful of your best customers; making sure you know who those customers are; not discounting unless there was no alternative; and discovering what people want you to sell them, and selling them that; and so on.

So I set out to become a marketing executive. Along the way, a human resources executive from Dunlop, the tyre manufacturer, interviewed me at a recruitment event at university. He told me that he thought I was better suited to advertising than marketing.

Subsequently he wrote to me suggesting the names of some advertising agencies I might approach. What I didn't realise at the time was that they were all agencies that did work for Dunlop. The power of patronage being what it was back then meant that at the very least I would have been granted an interview if I told them that someone from Dunlop had encouraged me to apply for a job with them.

However, after five rejection letters (biologists weren't top of advertising agencies' hire lists in those days, whereas arts graduates from Oxford and Cambridge were) I wasn't so much disheartened as even more determined to learn all I could about advertising.

I read everything I could lay my hands on. The more I read, the more fascinated I became – and the more determined. Then, one day, The Times newspaper carried a competition that was being run by J. Walter Thompson — at that time, London's number one advertising agency. I entered and was invited for an interview.

To their eternal credit, despite having rejected me initially, they granted me a place on the graduate selection process: six gruelling interviews.

Together with another applicant, an Oxford graduate, I was hired. I was the first-ever non-Oxbridge graduate to be given a management trainee job by J. Walter Thompson. Suddenly, a whole new and exciting world opened up before me.

At first I floundered. I had been a top dog at university and now had to get used to life at the bottom of the food chain.

Even more worrying was that most of the people that surrounded me seemed to be formidably bright. I felt unable even to begin to match their intellects.

After a difficult 18 months, I was headhunted by one of J. Walter Thompson's competitors, Collett, Dickenson, Pearce and Partners (CDP). This agency was at the cutting edge of

creativity and, although it had a fair number of Oxbridge men, it also employed non-graduates from working class backgrounds such as mine on its staff.

At CDP my ethos of working harder really came into its own. I did more work than any of my contemporaries. I learnt that hard work meant I could match their output.

Every weekend I would avidly read documents that other account managers would lend me.

Eventually, it sunk in that I was starting to learn. The harder I worked the more I learnt. And the more I learnt, the more successful I became, and the happier and more fulfilled I felt. I read more than my peers. I noticed that often they would talk, rather than listen. Which to me didn't make sense.

After seven years, when I was only 28, CDP asked me to start a second advertising agency, CDP Aspect, to mop up business that the main agency was unable to handle. Four years later, I bought it out with seven others.

At that time the management buy-out of CDP Aspect was the largest-ever to have taken place in London advertising.

I successfully sold it seven years later, just after I had turned 35.

As *Campaign*, the advertising trade magazine, reported in December 1982, I had gone in as something akin to the "joint post of captain, groundsman and turnstile operator" at an unknown football club and emerged like a player joining the Premier League.

What had I done? And how did I do it? Not just through hard work, but hard work combined with purposeful learning. I had become successful by working hard and learning to be smart. I learnt to grow in the skills that would help me to be fulfilled and to succeed. This had allowed me to achieve more than my peers. I had proved that it doesn't matter where or how