

## **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**

### ***Mark S***

"I worked with Chris after finishing university and he's able to provide great insight when it comes to navigating the job market and finding a position which suits your interests. I currently work in marketing and Chris was instrumental in helping me find a position and provided great support, in terms of his own experience in marketing, once I had started the position. I'd highly recommend Graduate Coach."

### ***Sophie***

"He helped me hone my interview technique."

"Chris was a great help when I was looking for a job once completing my bar exams. He helped me hone my interview technique as well as allowing me to create a CV that demonstrated my skills in an effective manner. Overall, a wonderful experience."

### ***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 STUDENT BOOK

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

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

# **THE STUDENT BOOK**

**All you need to know to get  
the job you really want**

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

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# Foreword

I have huge admiration and respect for Chris for writing this book. Admiration for his desire to offer something back to the next generation of graduates and new employees — our future. Respect, as it takes courage and great dedication to put down in words the wisdom and experience built up over a long, at times arduous, but certainly successful career.

I have known Chris for 20 years, having stumbled upon him running one of the first ever CRM agencies, breaking new ground, setting new agendas. This, as I learnt, would become a common theme in his career and life. It was clear on first meeting Chris that he was not only a sharp business leader but he cared about his people, his clients and his friends. He was selfless in offering help, coaching and guidance to them. I see so much of this in the pages of this book.

I am also grateful to have had the chance to digest this immensely useful book, and to pass it on to my two eldest sons, one of whom is in his second year of university, the other about to embark into university life. I feel they are better prepared for what lies ahead having read this, and I feel a better parent for having been able to share it with them.

Thanks, Chris.

**Jon White**

# 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

Chris asked me to write this introduction not only because we've known each other since working together during the 1980s, but more importantly because of the sheer number of graduates I've personally interviewed and hired.

It was so much easier for our generation: fewer graduates, more jobs, much less pressure. Thus, I always give graduates a sympathetic hearing, yet often feel let down.

And why is that? Because contrary to what most students might believe, the time to start preparing to get a decent, graduate-level job isn't when they leave university. It's when they arrive. *The Student Book* sets out that preparation in detail.

To prepare, you need to know what's most important to an employer. What's important to me as the owner of a small vibrant advertising and brand development agency is that, firstly, I want the cleverest, most talented people I can get. Numerate, literate, creative, resilient, hard-working, eager to learn and with good people skills. (Nothing difficult there then!)

In return for a (sadly) modest salary, the trade-off is that they receive outstanding hands-on learning and experience very quickly. Little wonder then that after a couple of years they typically get brilliant jobs at great agencies, brushing aside their competitors who've done time on the usual 'graduate training scheme' at some large agency.

In the last decade or so most, if not all, hires have been second jobbers (who've chosen to start a new career in advertising) simply because so few graduates have any workplace skills or experience. Interestingly, whilst we've also taken numerous graduate interns, many from Chris, we're never approached by undergrads for an internship. That leaves you at a great advantage if you will follow the advice Chris gives in this book, and find yourself an internship while you are still at university.

On the topic of taking advice, please also wake up to just how competitive it is out here. It really is a numbers game. In the last 30 years, my agency has been on the receiving end of some 15,000 CVs, interviewed around 500 graduates and employed about 30. We get around 500 CVs every time we advertise for a graduate, and now interview a maximum of 12 for each position. The whittling down process must be brutal. Bad degree, bad grammar or spelling, bad English, and you don't even get close to making the first cut. By now you're maybe one in 100. Only then do we even look closely at your CV.

Again, do as Chris says and tell us clearly and succinctly why you should even make the short list. During the interview, make sure you know what you're talking about and be aware that you can't pull the wool over the eyes of an employer experienced in carrying out hundreds of interviews. And if I ever have to ask another interviewee why they chose not to look at our website first...

I know it's a bore having to prepare for getting a job whilst you're focused on getting a degree and enjoying university life. But if you don't do it, you won't get a decent job: one of your many competitors will.

Have a great time at university, by all means, but make sure you get a good degree and prepare for getting a good job, so can you also have a great life after.

*The Student Book* will help you. It is a step-by-step guide that will not only teach you how to acquire work after you leave full time education, but how to acquire the skills you need to get that job before you leave university. It will help you acquire the nine essential skills that employers look for in those they seek to employ. It will ensure that you understand these skills and how to express them clearly on a CV and cover letter, or job application form. It will prepare you for the competition you will face from other candidates, and show you how to outshine it. Crucially, it will teach you how to demonstrate beyond doubt to potential employers that you possess these skills.

It's impossible to stress enough how important these skills are, so study this book with care. Doing so will make all the difference between getting a dream job or joining the many thousands of graduates who end up languishing in non-graduate-level jobs each year.

**Jeff Fugler**



## Chapter 1

# How Hard Can it be to Get a Graduate Job?

Surely it can't be that hard to get a job after graduation?

Oh yes, it can. Every year, thousands of university leavers struggle to find graduate-level jobs. In fact, figures for 2017 show that 47 per cent were still searching for graduate-level jobs two years after graduation. Imagine that. Twenty-four months of job applications, twenty-four months of disappointments. Most of these graduates were what is described as 'under-employed'. In other words, to make ends meet, they were reduced to doing jobs that didn't require their hard-earned university qualifications. Which surely defeats the object of going to university in the first place?

There is something very important you need to understand about the graduate market, something that will make all the difference to your success in getting a graduate-level job. It is competitive so you must be ready to go head-to-head. But it is also lucrative: as a young person with fresh ideas, energy, and years ahead of you, you are in demand. Because of this, most top firms offer internships and graduate programmes but, at the start of each graduate recruitment cycle, most of these employers take on graduates who have performed well during these programmes. This means that there are fewer

graduate jobs left available for those who are not already doing work experience with these firms. I often come across graduates who have their hearts set on one or two top employers, and while a person must aim high, it is not realistic to think you are going to get a look in at one of these companies if you don't have the skills, attributes and experiences to match or rival those who already have one foot in their doors. This doesn't rule out the prospect of winning a position with the employer of your dreams, but you need to think smart and cast your net widely to develop the skills and experience you need wherever you can get them. That is if you want a graduate-level job.

So, what is a graduate-level job? A graduate-level job can be defined as follows: one that pays a good salary, makes proper use of a graduate's qualifications and skills, allows development, and provides the learning to develop the skills for self-advancement. That's the sort of job every graduate wants – but not the sort many end up with.

But why is that? Why is it so hard to get a graduate-level job? I can tell you why: because no one has ever properly taught you how to. Yes, we talk about how to write a great CV, we talk about how to write a good cover letter, and we talk about making a good impression at an interview. But no one – that's right, no one – has ever pulled together all the steps in a single place as clearly as *The Student Book*. No one has ever clearly explained that you must acquire the following five sets of key skills, attributes and experiences:

- 1.** You must have lots of relevant work experience (covered Chapters 2 to 4).
- 2.** You must know what type of job suits you (covered in Chapter 7).
- 3.** You must know how to demonstrate the nine employability skills on your CV (Chapter 6).

4. You must be familiar with the key psychometric tests (covered in Chapter 7).
5. You must know how to interview well (covered in Chapters 5 to 7).

If you lack any of these five sets of key skills, attributes and experiences, **no employer will offer you a graduate-level position**. And why do I care so passionately that you get one? Because even after years of coaching thousands of graduates to help them get the type of job they want I'm still moved by the lightbulb moment. That's the moment during a coaching session when the penny drops and a person begins to understand why, interview after interview, they've been getting nowhere. Now they feel hope, naturally. Because a graduate-level job means a career that is satisfying and rewarding. One that makes full use of your strengths and saves you from having to spend the rest of your working life paying off the debt of your university education, which, for most graduates, averages around £50,000. Young people are saddled with more debt than ever before when they graduate. Is it any wonder that, according to The Times, one in every seven students is worried sick about it? That's why I wrote this book, because after all you've invested, graduate under-employment is a scandal and graduate-level employment is the only type you deserve.

If someone said they had the key to how to get a graduate-level job you would want to lay your hands on it, wouldn't you? Well, that's what you are holding in your hands right now.

## How I landed my first graduate job

Although, when I graduated it was much easier to get a job, it was very difficult to get a great one. So, I understand the many frustrations that today's students go through.

This is my story of how I eventually cracked it.

I was studying Biology at the then Woolwich Polytechnic in London (now the University of Greenwich). I hated my course almost from the day I started when it became apparent that I would have to spend every afternoon in the labs. Being dyslexic and always impatient (still am!) was a disastrous combination for me. I loved and still do the theory side of the subject but hated the endless afternoons of lab work. I started skipping off and became interested in Student Union activities. I joined the Student Rag Week (look it up if you don't understand the term) committee and somehow found myself elected to run it. I was 18 and in charge of 35 students most of them third years. The Week turned out to be a big success (we raised lots of money for charity and created the world kissing record amongst other mad things).

Of course, my academic studies suffered and I just scraped my exams. However, I had come to realise that I could lead teams of people. During my two subsequent years I ran many Student Union activities, such as booking the bands (loved that!), chairing the bar committee (loved that too!) and finally was elected to become the first ever Student representative on the Board of Governors at the Poly.

However, by now time was running out and I had to get a job. In my final year, I was in Halls and the student in the room next to me began to fascinate me, because he never seemed to do any work.

I discovered that he was studying Marketing. I had no clue what Marketing was but he lent me his key textbook *Kotler on Marketing* (still published today, although now it's the 15th edition).

I read it and immediately became fascinated. Marketing seemed to me to be common sense (it is!) especially if you had worked in shops as I had. Identify your best customers, look after them and try to find more like them is a maxim as true today in this digital age as it was back then.