Changing Career

“Learning about the industry before graduating can help a student decide not to pursue a career as well as help them develop the skills for it.”

GEOFF’S STORY

Geoff is a great example of someone who did a degree which was closely tied to an industry, but instead of being drawn into it, was put off by it. In Geoff’s case, he learned a lot about industry which meant that he was certain he didn’t want to continue in that career once he had finished his degree.

Geoff was passionate about visual arts and wanted to do the best degree possible once he had finished school. To get into university he did a folio course with an independent design school—this was a short course to help create a folio of his best artwork which is used to assess the potential of students entering a visual arts degree.

The visual arts degree was closely integrated with industry. All of the academics were also active in the industry. Geoff learned most about the industry by getting to know his teachers.

Geoff was offered positions in visual arts degrees by three universities and accepted the one which, by reputation, was the best. His degree covered a variety of visual arts topics including typography; visual merchandising (advertising); art using the computer medium; and anatomical drawing.

The lecturers in Geoff’s degree were all well connected with the visual arts industry. Most were part-time academics whose main role was in visual arts. He learned a lot about the industry through their direct experience. In particular, he used to get a lift to university with one of his lecturers, and through the conversations in the car he found out a lot.

Geoff won a scholarship to do an eight week intensive course in Prato (Italy), the heart of the Italian Renaissance. This was an achievement as 300 people applied for twenty scholarships. He also got direct industry experience during his studies by working free-lance work, including working for a new cafe and a landscaping business.

Extra-curricular activities and work experience gave Geoff important skills and helped him learn first-hand about visual arts.

But Geoff’s passion for visual art diminished while he was doing his degree. He found the degree a grind: constant pressure with multiple projects all with a deadline. Geoff realised that the industry would be similar: multiple projects and constant deadlines.

For Geoff there was no room to create and be a perfectionist, as had been his dream. The other problem for Geoff was that salaries were not high in the industry either. It would be difficult to earn more than 50 or 60 thousand dollars throughout your career—unless you were exceptional.

The detailed knowledge Geoff learned about the industry through his degree made him decide not to pursue a career in it.
By the end of his degree, Geoff had decided that a career in visual arts was not for him. Geoff was not entirely certain what he would do. He was already working at a pub, so he continued working in the bottleshop and became gaming manager. Although he didn’t see this as a long-term objective, it paid the bills and gave him great work experience. Working in a pub gave Geoff something vital: experience at handling responsibility through his role as the gaming manager.

One thing that had been a constant through Geoff’s life was his dedication to personal fitness, and so he enrolled in a three month personal trainer course. He found he had a flair for this and has established a thriving business with up to 80 training sessions a week in local gyms.

It took Geoff a little while to decide what to do instead of visual arts. In the end Geoff pursued his other passion—personal fitness. Geoff still likes visual arts and still does some on the side. He thinks it’s important to keep up his skill as a fall-back. As he says:

You never know what might happen, I could be injured and no longer able to work as a personal trainer.