

My Big Life Decisions Post- Secondary School

I remember leaving The Priory School as clearly as I remember the last time we left the house – it does not feel almost 11 years ago! Not the day itself necessarily, but the mixed emotions and feelings I had are so easy to recall. It was a little excitement, but mostly trepidation and nervousness. Suddenly, there was an unknown path ahead and with that came a lot of choices. I was always worried about whether I would make the right decisions that would lead me to where I wanted to be (though admittedly, I didn't know where that was!) So here is a summary of the big academic/career choices I've made up to now!

1. **Sixth Form. 2009 -2011** – *Urmston Grammar. English, French, Business Studies and Maths.*

After living with my Mum all my life I decided to move to my Dad's in Manchester and go to Sixth Form there, where I didn't know anyone. The Sixth Form was attached to a school, so everyone else had been together for 5 years already. I was the odd one out with the posh accent! The result...a whole new bunch of best friends and a big city to explore! It's not an option to everyone but something I'm glad I was brave enough to do!

2. **University. 2011- 2015** – *University of Warwick, BSc International Management*

I was fairly academic at school (no sports ability or creativity on the other hand...) so choosing to go to university wasn't a hard decision, nor was the choosing the course – Miss Blower had firmly instilled a love of Business Studies in me since I was 12! The decision for me was where to go...Having fallen in love with Manchester I desperately wanted to stay there, and all my friends were staying local (Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool). However, I even more desperately wanted to make sure I would always fulfil my potential, and there was an opportunity to go somewhere new. I decided to put my first choice as Warwick: it was good for my course, modern, not too far away and a campus style university so I knew I wouldn't be lost in a big city. Despite not knowing a single person when I arrived, I left 4 years later with great memories and even greater friends!

3. **Year Abroad. 2013** - *Copenhagen, Denmark.*

I had decided at school I wanted to go on a year abroad so I could learn to speak French. The problem during my A-levels was that I was terrible at studying French literature, so that ruled out a Business with French course for me. Still feeling like I couldn't miss an opportunity to explore, I had opted for an International Management course with a compulsory Year Abroad. Purely based on a recommendation from a student a couple of years above, I decided to go to Copenhagen. I hadn't even really heard of Copenhagen before that. Fast forward several months and I arrived at aged 19, in a city where I didn't speak a word of the language, with no friends and very little money! It will without a doubt, remain the best experience of my life – not because it was challenging or rewarding or boosted my career or anything like that. It was simply just 12 months of complete and utter, care-free, fun!

4. **Summer Internship. 2014 – P&G**

I ended up with a Summer Internship by chance after I had applied for a job (and been rejected) as part of my Year Abroad – they offered me an internship in the UK instead. I'd not considered doing an internship before, and I almost said no when they told me they were sending me to Newcastle-upon-Tyne instead of London, where all my friends were for the summer. Another arrival in a new city without knowing a soul! It turns out, internships are a brilliant way to explore whether a career choice is for you, get a job offer (like I did), or just get some relevant experience for your CV.

5. **My Career. 2015 - now – Human Resources Manager, P&G**

My interest in HR was an unusual choice compared to my course-mates, but I had worked part-time since I was 14 and felt very strongly about our employee rights such as pay, break times, holidays, shift patterns – I spent more time arguing with managers about whether they were 'fair' than I did working! Eventually someone told me you could make a living thinking about these things, so here I am – a HR Manager at Procter & Gamble. I've been with the same company since graduating, but I have been fortunate enough to work in four HR roles in different UK locations (including in the very glamorous Pampers nappy factory!) so it never gets boring. Now I'm currently working on a Global Project in our Compensation and Benefits organisation, back in my new home of Newcastle.

The choices I made were not all easy ones because often with a decision, you are leaving something behind (usually life as you know it!). But my best experiences have been from my boldest decisions, whenever I have done something that was right for me - not because someone else thought I should or doing what my friends did. Someone told me recently that you will never know whether you have made the right decision, because you will never walk the other path and find out 'what could have been'. You can only know if you have made a good decision based on the information you have and how you feel. For me, if I felt excited but also a little scared, then I knew it was a good decision!

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