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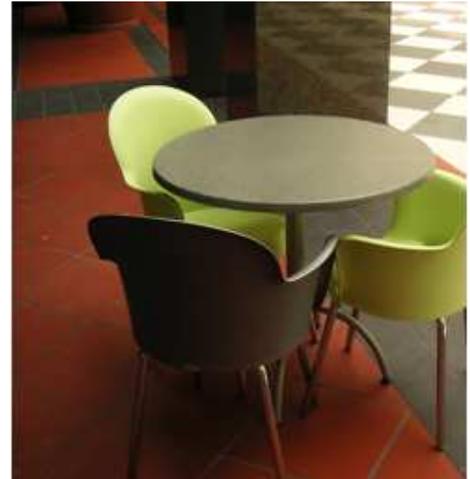
ABOUT IABC

## student connection

### Career and Industry Library

#### Feature Articles

IABC members study and work in all fields of communication, all around the world. Feature articles by industry experts written specially for our student members help you tap into their knowledge and take advantage of IABC's greatest resource—our people.

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### Working Perspectives

From steeling themselves for months of bureaucratic paperwork in order to get that perfect job, to leveraging their age as an asset instead of an impediment, IABC members recall the surprises and successes of their transition from student to professional life, so you won't have to reinvent the wheel.

## ON LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

### Changing a career trajectory

"I started my working life as a musician, playing double bass in jazz and blues bands around the U.K. and across Europe. After 10 fun and pretty exhausting years, I started working in communication with a charity, and signed up to do an honors degree part time at the University of London. I graduated with a first in humanities, having moved onto primary research publishing and with the first two of my four children having already arrived. I would say that the most surprising change for me was discovering that there are many different routes into a career. I guess I had feared that I might have missed the boat because of my unconventional career path. But that hasn't proven to be the case at all. And one of the main reasons that I know that is through my involvement with IABC and the leadership, networking and continuing professional development opportunities that it gives me access to."

—Ezri Carlebach, director of communications, Lifelong Learning UK (London)

### No shortage of options

"I was shocked at how much say you can have over your own career. I thought that if you were a journalism major, there would be a specific path you would need to take. Likewise if you were a communications major or a PR major—or any kind of major.

"Nothing could be further from the truth. Your career can be whatever you want it to be. That is especially true in this age of social media, when you can use tools like Twitter, blogs and podcasts to really make a name for yourself.

My one piece of advice: If you don't think you're a good enough writer—take more classes. Even with all the new tools, *content* is what matters. And content comes down to writing. If you can write, there will always be a job for you!"

—Steve Crescenzo, CEO, Crescenzo Communications (Chicago)

### **Working in the EU**

"I earned my master's in Belgium, but am originally from the United States. I naively assumed that with a master's degree from a prestigious school and fluency in two major languages, I would easily find a job in Europe. To say that I was sorely mistaken is an understatement.

"First, speaking two languages is not very impressive in most European countries. Second, it is common for graduates, even those with an advanced degree, to do an extensive period as an intern. These positions are rarely paid, or the salaries are very low.

"Third, the requirements for obtaining a work permit are extremely demanding. The employer must be able to prove that the applicant has unique skills or talents that no one else in the entire European Union (EU) can provide. It is rare that any recent graduate will meet this "specialist" criterion.

"My advice to young graduates from other countries who want to work in the EU is to look at work abroad programs offered from your home country. Alternatively, obtaining a traineeship visa is easier if you can prove that you are still registered as a student and the internship is a required part of your coursework. Find a job at an international company that is willing to send you abroad. Another option is to begin with a job where you travel abroad.

"If you do attempt to get hired abroad directly, be prepared for a long and sometimes costly process (I had to return to my home country several times in order to prove I was not living illegally in the country or to pick up a visa). The entire process from student to trainee to employee took more than a year.

"Moving abroad can be extremely rewarding and enriching. However, it is challenging to deal with an unfamiliar administrative system, a new professional culture, finding housing and other details of living abroad without the support of nearby family and friends. The experience of traveling in a country is very different from living there. Such an adventure should not be undertaken lightly. It requires logistical and mental preparation. Above all, be realistic about what you are getting into. I have seen starry-eyed people arrive with a romantic idea of what living in Paris would be like only to see them reduced to tears when the dream hadn't worked out a mere two weeks later!"

—Kristen Sukalac, partner and senior adviser, Prospero Communications (L'Hay Les Roses, France)

### **Leveraging your unique talents**

"When I entered the workforce after graduation from university, my age was both an advantage and disadvantage. My education and talent was in behavioral research and community development strategy. But it was my communication technology skills and my youth that gave me my credibility in an emerging online world of business. I was one of the first to establish an online survey business. Using the advantage of my technical credibility I was able to leverage my research knowledge and skills. My advice is to join the community in which you want to work, join in the conversations, then create the opportunities to demonstrate your value to the community."

—Ryan Williams, president, TWI Surveys Inc. (Delta, British Columbia)

### **Accountability and responsibility in the workplace**

"The most surprising thing to me when I entered the workforce right after graduation was the speed with which I was brought in on important roles in big projects at Deveney Communication. My decision to work at a small company after internships at organizations both large and small allowed me to really jump in and do substantial work, including presentations to clients and major media relations campaigns. I really enjoyed feeling like I was immediately a valuable addition to the team."

—Anna Whitlow, communication strategist, Deveney Communication (New Orleans, Louisiana)

### Balancing theoretical and practical training

“For me, transitioning into professional life produced the sudden realization that I didn’t know half as much as I thought I did! It’s a shock to go from being in the final year of university, having written thousands of words, studied for innumerable hours, read hundreds of books, and then suddenly discover that really, you don’t know much at all. On reflection, I didn’t do enough work experience—whether volunteering or internships—while I was at university. I needed more practical exposure to the world of communication. I think study is great—I eventually went back and completed a master’s degree—but it must go hand-in-hand with real world experience. My advice to students is to beg as much work experience as you can possibly get. Even if you’re stuck stuffing envelopes, or making coffee, you’re getting exposure to what life in communication is really like. Make the most of it.”

—Melissa Dark, CEO, Melissa Dark and Associates (Pahran, Australia)

“There is a vast difference between the academic theory and strategic thought processes that are taught at college and the practical application of those theories in the workplace. For me, the huge gap between the two created a challenging and exciting opportunity to further my erudition and experience. This was an unexpected challenge, as one regularly believes that a college background alone will prepare you for working life. For this reason, it is imperative for students to gain work experience in the form of internships, and to form important networks with key industry bodies.”

—Daniel Munslow, executive strategist, Newsclip Media Monitoring (Gauteng, South Africa)

### This isn’t so bad after all...

“The most surprising thing for me was that I loved working! I liked having a routine and a set series of tasks to complete every day. My first job after graduating was as the marketing assistant for a communication consultancy and I really enjoyed going out to sales meetings, coming back to the office and writing the proposals to win the business. And, when we did win projects it was a great feeling. It’s funny—I thought as a student I couldn’t cope with ‘proper’ hard work, but here I am 10 years later and still doing it.”

—Luisa Sorrentino, internal communication manager, The Fifth Business (The Hague, Netherlands)