The benefits of seeking work experience

Daniel Mortimer

As my parents are both shopkeepers, I grew up in a food retail environment, gaining an early understanding of the customer and the pressures the industry faces. Having also always had a passion for great food, taking Food Technology at A Level seemed like the logical next step. This gave me the appreciation for the whole supply chain and I became aware of the career opportunities across the industry. I chose to study Food Science with Business at the University of Reading – a decision that was alien to many without a food background. I still believe the food industry suffers from an image problem and lacks the glamour associated with many traditional graduate destinations. It is something I am very passionate about and I spent a lot of time working with the University to help change this perception.

Following my first year, I was lucky enough to be awarded a scholarship from Northern Foods and I approached them for summer work experience – something I cannot recommend enough for current and future undergraduates. I moved to Nottingham for the summer and spent the time managing factory projects and supporting the technical team in the production of sandwiches for Tesco.

This experience put me in a very strong position when applying for full year placements the following autumn. To balance my CV and apply my business knowledge, I joined the commercial team at Premier Foods. My role was to support the management of the M&S ready meal account. I gained valuable exposure to the retailer’s category teams and interacted with the buyers, technologists and product developers.

Feeling that I had developed an appreciation of the supply side of the industry I chose to return to food retail. During the completion of my final year, I applied to join Sainsbury’s as part of their 2020 Leaders Scheme; a fast track programme designed to help you progress quickly and gain broad experience across the business. I’m almost one year in and my roles have been incredibly varied. I’ve spent time alongside a variety of business areas from supply chain and marketing to running departments in Sainsbury’s stores. The breadth and scope of the scheme is both rewarding and appealing, and there is never a chance to get bored!

To those future graduates or anyone new to the industry, feel free to contact me with any questions via my Linkedin page http://uk.linkedin.com/in/danielmortimer1/

My passion for Research and Development

Namrata Chowdhury

I come from a small town in Bangladesh, where people struggle for their basic needs. Despite this, I have managed to come all the way to my current position. Due to my academic results in school, I received scholarships for my entire education till higher secondary school, and then had an offer from the Indian Government to pursue a B. Pharm at the University of Pune, India. Here, I most enjoyed Analytical Chemistry and Spectrometry and developed my passion for research, taking an MSc in Pharmaceutical Analysis.

My first placement was with Unilever as an Analytical Chemist. During my two-and-a-half years, I learnt how to utilise my knowledge for FMCG products and environmental analysis, and worked under GLP regulated laboratories. I developed a passion for operating and troubleshooting Liquid/Gas Chromatography–Mass Spectroscopy (LC-MS, GC-MS), and also started developing analytical methods in order to help product development and quality checks of existing products.

Currently, I am with Campden BRI, the UK’s largest independent membership-based organisation carrying out research and development for the food and drinks industry worldwide. My main responsibility here involves method development, including sample preparation and instrumental aspects (LC-MS, GC-MS, ion chromatography). Key roles involve experimental design, data analysis, method validation, report writing and training analysts. These methods are used to identify, flavour profiles, taints, trace level mycotoxins and undesirable chemicals that could adversely affect human health. I have developed methods for 4-methylimidazole (from caramel colouring), a seven organic acids screen, Alternaria mycotoxins, and bisphenol A. Besides method development, I also immensely enjoy supervising junior members to inspire them to take a logical approach to research.

Recently, I won the BFBI (Brewing, Food and Beverage industry) ‘Up and Coming Analyst’ 2013 competition sponsored by Thermo Scientific for my work on 4-methylimidazole. I aim to continue my career in Campden BRI research projects where I can manage diverse projects and challenges, achieve a direct benefit to people’s health with my research, and raise public awareness in food safety.

I believe that strong will power and passion always help you to achieve goals in life. Not every day at work is easy but each day teaches you new things and these experiences will make you more understanding, logical and responsible. My advice to the people in their early career is to keep an open mind and try to enjoy and learn different aspects of your work. You will find your career goals when you put dedication into your work and eventually find which areas interest you most.