

# CIE Symposium 2019 - Confidence

## Bouncebackability : Preparing for Success and Overcoming Setback



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# The Premise

- Graduates often reported to lack this:

- Negotiating/influencing, self-awareness, managing conflict and interpersonal skills all included in the skills most likely to be lacking in graduates (Institute of Student Employers (ISE) Annual Survey, 2017)
- Resilience takes the longest time to develop (minimum 7-12 months)
- Being aware of this should provide us with a chance to give our graduates a head start



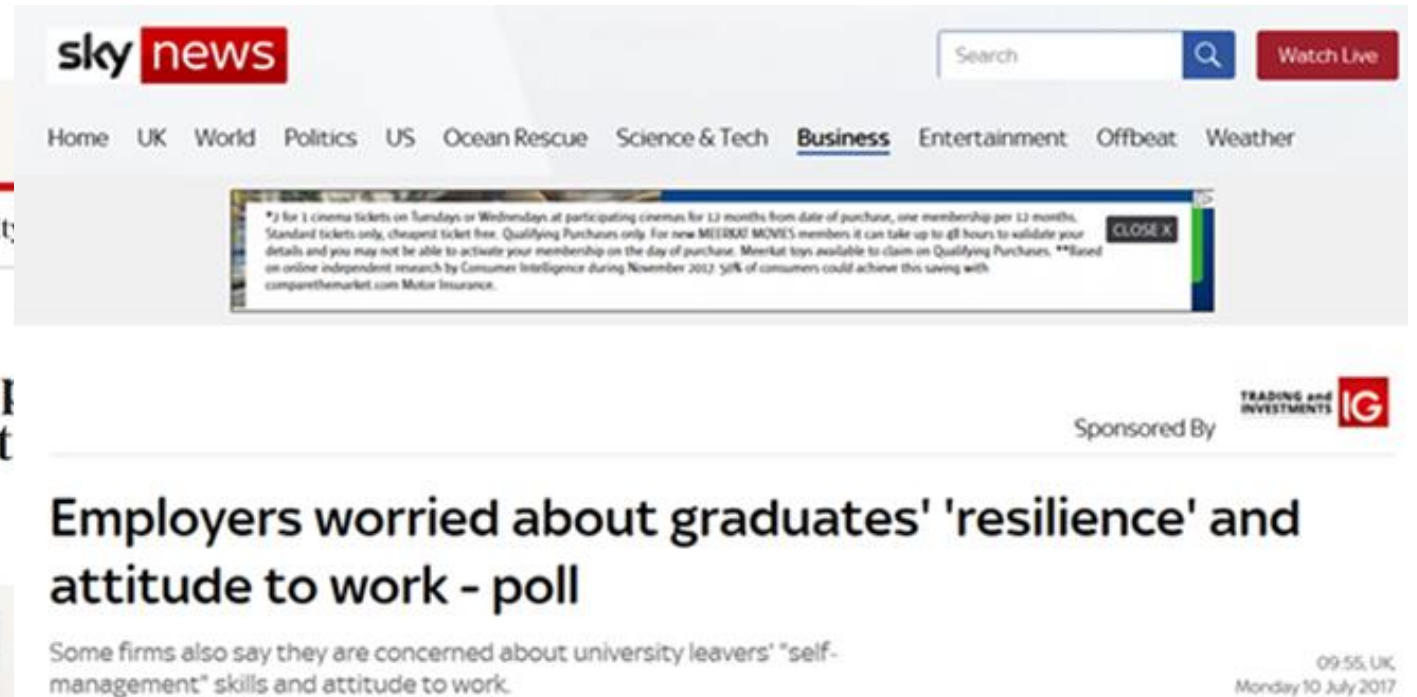
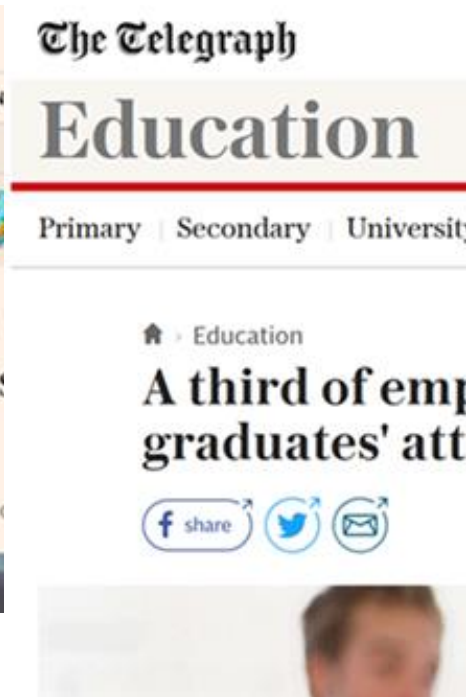
- Recruitment practices tell us employers are very serious about it:

- Strength-based questions, focus more on the experience; “describe a day that didn’t go to plan, how did you react?”
- Person specifications; ‘positive attitude’, ‘confident’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘cool decision maker’, ‘tenacity’, ‘persistent’, ‘innovative’
- Unilever; Gamification at first stage of process, 12 mini tasks produce personality report
- PwC; Tour universities delivering resilience session (in collaboration with TeachFirst)



# The Premise

- It's a hot topic



- Anecdotally, we see this impact student's hopes and chances every day when speaking about the experience of applying for graduate jobs, overcoming rejection and staying positive and persistent

# Graduate Resilience: Why?



Put simply, this has now become an essential recruitability requirement for nearly all graduate employers...

To be successful you should have:

## BAE SYSTEMS

### What you'll need

To apply, you'll need to be on course for achieving a 2:2 Bachelor's degree in an engineering, numerical or scientific subject, be eligible to work in the UK, and be able to successfully achieve security clearance.

We'll also look for you to demonstrate exceptional problem solving and analytical skills and have the flexibility and resilience to thrive at BAE Systems.

### Skill required for these roles:



- Strong communication, analytical and writing skills
- Ability to communicate complex analysis and arguments in a concise, easy to follow manner
- High attention to detail, with an ability to organise, prioritise and multi-task
- A proactive and enthusiastic approach to work, with a high level of initiative
- Ability to build good working relationships
- Self-motivated and natural team player
- Ability to work independently if needed
- Sense of urgency, calm under pressure, resilient and flexible
- Literate in MS Word and Excel
- Background / knowledge and passion in environmental sustainability and/or environment health and safety.



- The ability to thrive in a sales environment with the strong customer focus.
- The confidence to work with senior dealer staff and engage them in aftersales programmes and opportunities.
- The capability to deliver both independently and as part of a team.
- Resilience to achieve hard deadlines whilst working under pressure.
- Excellent organizational skills and an ability to prioritise effectively.
- Ability to motivate others and communicate effectively through the development of interpersonal skills.

### What We Are Looking For?

- Degree in IT, Engineering, Mathematics, Science or related discipline.
- Passion for Software Development and technology.
- Ambition and eagerness to build a successful career within IT.
- Analytical and commercial focus.
- Resilience and ability to remain calm under pressure.



# The Theory and Discussion



- Professor Peter Clough's model for Mental Toughness. The 'Four Cs'



- **Confidence** (divided in self-confidence and confidence in abilities)
- **Commitment** (see things through)
- **Control** (emotional control and life control)
- **Challenge** (an opportunity not a threat)

**The Discussion:** A focus on two areas;

- 1) Application process
- 2) Transition to new work environment

Discussion in groups, reviewed across the class and using individual stories. The student's encouraged to offer their thoughts throughout to help gain reassurance and share their own coping strategies.





# The Application Process



Activity: In a small group, discuss what you most fear when it comes to graduate job applications.

Typical difficulties can include:

What to wear at interviews

High levels of competition

Panel/video interview

Delivering a presentation

Making a start

Assessment Centre

Time

Strength-based questions

Predict what the employer wants

Staying motivated

Travel

Nerves

Deciding which opportunity to apply for

Not being good enough

Competency-based questions

How to sell yourself

Some these are practical factors that can be addressed with **planning and organisation**. However, the others all relate to your levels of resilience. How do the '**4 Cs**' relate to this?

- Being in **control** your emotions in nerve-wracking situations means you perform at your best in interviews or presentations;
- Being **committed** to finding your ideal opportunity keeps you motivated and see the **challenge** of shining during an application process as an opportunity, not a threat;
- Having **confidence** in yourself and your abilities means you don't see high levels of competition as intimidating, merely as a challenge that needs careful planning.
- Importance of **feedback**



# The Graduate Workplace



Activity: In your group, discuss what you feel will be the biggest barriers you face in adapting to a new job.

- Typical difficulties can include:

Meeting your new colleagues

Learning the corporate culture

Learning new technology/tools

The commute

Understanding your role

Opportunity to show your skills

Where/how to access support

Nerves

Being confident to ask questions

Winning people over

Once again, some are purely practical. But others, particularly around your impact, are really strongly supported by the four aspects that underpin mental toughness – **the Four Cs**

- **Confidence** means you introduce yourself; you speak up at team meetings; you suggest new ideas; you don't mind asking for help
- Being in **control** means you don't let the difficulties of starting a new job overwhelm you; making mistakes, forgetting people's names, getting caught in a busy commute. Your **commitment** means you see the tough times out!
- Seeing the more complex aspects of the job as a **challenge** and as an opportunity to impress
- **The Rule of 21** – Habit forming behaviour (Maltz)

# Resources

**Resources.** Alongside the discussion, I use tools to support the message and demonstrate the impact of pressure on performance. They can vary dependent on the group size and 'feel' of how well they will interact. Includes:

- Numbers Grid – focus exercise/ice breaker, evidences impact of concentration on achieving specific goal
- Stroop Test – participants feel pressure while performing a relatively simple task. Safe, optional, fun.
- For example....what colour ink is this word written in?

Red

Blue

Orange

Purple

Green

Red

24	43	58	90	49	67	89	86	62	50
3	64	76	84	10	52	27	94	8	77
92	45	53	37	29	17	54	42	19	99
81	0	22	57	31	96	39	12	33	20
25	36	65	88	14	2	78	85	47	87
56	13	6	74	48	23	90	73	98	91
60	41	80	5	11	51	68	38	72	83
97	75	34	79	26	46	82	9	63	16
35	44	21	40	1	69	61	7	55	71
4	30	93	66	59	32	18	70	28	15



# To finish...

**Top Tips.** I felt a frustration at the lack of tools that students can actually use to help develop and practice their resilience. I researched different suggestions and collated ten that I felt were most helpful.

## Message of the Day:

- 1) Experience new things
- 2) Reflect on the experience in a meaningful way afterwards

### Graduate Resilience – Hints and Tips

What can you do to develop, maintain and improve your mental toughness and resilience in anticipation of these challenges? There is no quick fix, but being self-aware and using some of these techniques can help.

- ❑ **Action planning:** Set yourself targets – big or small – that take you nearer to your goal. For example: the long term goal of applying for with a major graduate recruiter can be broken down to a series of small, manageable steps like 'Research the organisation' or 'Contact my references'. In a new job, setting a goal of 'speaking to everyone in your team by Friday' helps overcome multiple potential difficulties. Don't be afraid to incentivise your goals.
- ❑ **Positive thoughts, yes...but always think through a worst case scenario:** Thinking positively is crucial but the importance of considering what you would do if things were to go wrong can ease anxiety before a job interview or first day at work. It's always good to have a back-up plan. Not unfettered negativity; just good sensible 'what if...' preparation.
- ❑ **Support network:** Use professional support for advice and guidance. Personal tutors, your Careers Adviser, former colleagues and most new graduates are assigned a workplace mentor. Use them!
- ❑ **Build and maintain your relationships:** Keep the people who know you best and have believed in you from the beginning close by. Your own cheerleading squad should your motivation ever drop.
- ❑ **Life balance:** Exercise, hobbies, socialising, family time. All these things can help keep you calm and focused. There is more to your life than just work and these can provide a welcome break when things are hectic.
- ❑ **Failings:** Failing is a part of life everyone experiences. A bad result in an assignment, a failure to get past a job interview, even failing to make a school sports team. Research shows that what characterises those who succeed is not that they have never failed, but that they learnt from the experience to become better, more resilient next time. Just read the famous quotes from The Beatles (being rejected by a record company), Muhammed Ali, Albert Einstein and many others to see for yourself.
- ❑ **Gain experience:** The best way to learn about something is to experience it. While at university, take as many chances as you can to experience the workplace. The more familiar it is, the less daunting. This applies for graduates actively applying as well and you should consider voluntary work. Think of each experience as practice for the next. Plus there are so many knock-on benefits too: networking, evidence for CV/applications, skill development, testing different roles etc.
- ❑ **Constructive feedback:** Vital for all job seekers (but can be also applied after work placements/internships). After every interview ALWAYS ask for feedback. Good employers will provide details of things you did well, things you could improve and you should find the experience uplifting and enlightening.
- ❑ **Visualisation:** Usain Bolt visualises each step of a race repetitively before every athletics event. You can use this too; for example, mentally rehearse how well your interview will go by anticipating the answers you will give to certain questions. You can trick the brain into believing you have done this before even if you haven't had much experience.
- ❑ **Record your success:** We have a tendency to remember the bad experiences during an interview or assessment centre but forget the things we did well. Feel proud that you answered a question well or performed highly on a psychometric assessment. Remember that success for next time. Equally, in your first few weeks in a new job, acknowledge colleagues congratulating you on a suggestion and save any emails that give you positive feedback. They can be handy boosts if things get tough.

# It's good to talk...



If anyone would like a conversation about any of the topics discussed or future collaboration, get in touch.

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**GET IN  
TOUCH**  
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