

Choosing Your Career

Milkround Online



Tom Hughes – Founder and Managing Director, Milkround Online

Graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge; worked as a civil engineer on the Jubilee Line Extension; as a management consultant before setting up Milkround.

Money is a key issue for all graduates, especially with the introduction of top-up fees leading to increased debt levels for many. You might feel stressed about getting a job straight away to start clearing the amount you owe, but there is every reason to be confident of securing a career that suits you whatever your first step on the job ladder.

This year the annual Association of Graduate Recruiters survey revealed the graduate job market is offering even more well-paid opportunities. It claims there will be 13 percent more vacancies for you to choose from compared with last year, including increased salaries in almost all regions. Although the AGR predicts a fall in starting wages in East Anglia and the highly popular graduate destination of London, 14 and five percent respectively, this is no major cause for concern: your wage will still be highly competitive in comparison to non-graduate starters. So with all that choice, you might find yourself with a headache trying to decide how best to choose your career. Well, you should not feel that there is any right or wrong decision when it comes to beginning your working journey. The skills learnt and experience gained in any job will be key motivators for personal change and development for the rest of your life.

Careers aren't as simple and predefined as they were even 10 years ago: just look at the way the media industry has changed and developed with broadband and digital television opening up more and more opportunities for talented individuals like you. New technology and changes to the way we work, such as flexitime and the rise of 24-hour services, are indicators of an ever-developing job market. The increasingly wide range of working environments means there is a wealth of experience to be gained, and this means there are ample opportunities to develop your skills while understanding the challenges of fulfilling your career goals. I have had an eclectic career, proving you don't need to have a clear idea of your future fresh out of university.

After I graduated, my first job was with London Underground as a civil engineer. It seemed like a role that would enable me to have a positive input into society, away from the big business-minded City or another popular graduate industry such as management consulting. Fresh out of university, who was I to go telling others the best approaches for running their companies?

However, a few months later I realised engineering was not for me and found myself consulting after all. I joined a small and promising firm where I discovered a consultant needed both mental stamina and clarity of vision. It also became apparent that the ability

to put in a hard day's work, regardless of how exciting or how menial the tasks might be, was one of the key things I could bring to the role. It was this working ethic that helped kick-start my vision for a graduate recruitment service which would go on to become Milkround Online.

Although the potential of the Internet was far from being realised in 1996, I was sure it would have a continuingly influential effect on the world. As my confidence grew in the project, I quit my job to focus on it full time: today's Milkround Online Network is the fruit of many years' hard graft. The journey to this point has not been clear cut by any means, but it does show you how the industry you start in is not necessarily the one you will stay in for your entire career.

When I look around the Milkround Online office, I see other members of staff who have changed their career direction, even within the company. Polly Littlewood joined us as a temporary administrative assistant while at university and has become the Second Post Product Manager, looking after our service for graduates with experience in the workplace. Charlotte Carney began her time at Milkround in 2004 as a junior sales support executive, but just three years later heads up her own team of six within the account management department.

Elsewhere, we have recruited based on skills already acquired. Richard Freeborn had a history campaigning for equality while at Durham University so was a natural fit as Diversity Milkround Product Manager, our website aimed at breaking down barriers in the graduate job market. Mike Barnard's previous roles as a journalist and freelance writer made him ideal for a role in content and communications for the whole of Milkround Online. These examples just go to show how everyone's career is so very different and open to change, yet we have all started somewhere.

The Milkround Online Network enables you to take that first step into the graduate job market with Milkround.com. On the site you'll find all the traditional graduate jobs and schemes in industries such as accountancy, banking, engineering, law and manufacturing with the biggest employers. You'll also find many medium and small firms recruiting one or two graduates in a wide variety of roles. To stay up to date with all the vacancies matching your career preferences, you can sign up for personalised job alert emails.

Whichever direction you take as you start on your career path, remember, the employers need you and there are always options available in a job market geared towards what you have to offer.