

***“Tell us a little bit about your journey from University into I guess the business world and your progression through the journey”***

Sure, so I started my Commerce degree at Melbourne Uni many moons ago, and it was probably far less specialized than the degrees that everyone you know comes out and graduates with today. Really they were kind of a couple of main streams you could travel down it was either you know doing Finance and Accounting or marketing as I certainly wasn't you know specializations into technology or anything else currently exists so I ended up you know finishing my Commerce degree, graduating and I joined Pacific Brands as a graduate which was you know quite different - Pacific Brands at that time had had a large clothing group, they had household products – Footwear, sleepwear - all sorts of amazing brands that you would find in many discount department stores around Australia. I was seconded ??? in a marketing company role and worked with a senior IP partner there and learnt a huge amount when I went out to a number of the different businesses and travelled interstate quite a lot and embraced opportunities. From there, I ended up moving overseas and ended up working for a Telco, which was slightly different, but it was a time they were launching selling mobile phones in supermarkets and ??? in service stations across the UK, so my experience was relevant there. I moved to Vertex which is a contacts/outsourcing CRM company around 2000's. I came back to Australia and worked for teletech, then I then I spent probably the bulk of my career at IBM for 13 years, and since then I just joined EY in January this year as a partner in our technology advisory team in the financial services organization.

***“Excellent! So it's quite clear you moved through a couple industries and had a career that probably wasn't what you expect as a student so if you can think back reflecting to when you were a student, were there career ambitions that you had or was there a direction you wanted to go down from an internship or such?”***

I did vacation work at PwC that was in audit and it taught me a lot about the companies that we were auditing at the time, but also explained to me It was something I didn't really want to pursue as a career – apologies to all you budding auditors out there it's obviously a very specific career that many people tackle but it wasn't for me and so I remember telling my parents when I was offered a graduate job at PwC that I was turning it down and they weren't particularly impressed with my choice but I think being able to be true

to yourself and do something you really want to do is also really important I ended up at xxxx and I think as a student it's really just about embracing opportunities and being able to make the most of them – getting exposure to things that you enjoy because you spend a lot of time at work, so you know you really want to make sure that whatever you're going to be doing is something that you're going to be passionate and excited about because you know you spend a lot of time to work and

it's probably somewhere we won't have as much fun as you do in your private life – I probably didn't plan it - it wasn't a planned career and I have moved around quite a lot – part of it was going over to London - my boyfriend at the time moved to London - he's now my husband - so that's probably good move (moving to London). I went with \$5,000 in my bank count and didn't have a job and took a risk which in many ways has paid off really well for my career but I think just being open to opportunity, meeting people, continuing to network throughout your career and being open to as many opportunities as you can try out is probably the way to go and it's certainly worked for me.

***“Following on from that, would you say that it’s alright not to have a passion or have a passion for an industry after you go university? Is it alright to still be unsure of what is out there?”***

Absolutely, I think if I look at my career trajectory there's no way I could have planned that out and any experience you get across different industries is going to be good experience. So from clothing and sporting goods and footwear, through some of the work I've been doing more recently in banking and in digital and analytics some of these industries didn't really exist right at the time when I started my career. People used to hand around memos which makes me sound really old but there were paper memos that were dropped on people's desks because there was no emails, so if you think of that over 15 years ago, careers that are prominent now and a lot of the work that's being done around particularly digital, and for me in banking I hadn't really worked in banking before ever in my career so IBM afforded me that opportunity and that's something I'm really growing on at EY. but I think it's absolutely ok to not have a plan and I think part of that's just about your attitude - you've got to have an open mind, never stop learning probably also don't compromise on your personal values and things that are important to you. So things unfold, it comes down to people you meet in your career, people who can help you - there's a huge start-up community in Melbourne at the moment, there's some amazing

co-working spaces I wish existed when I was a student because I think it just provides such opportunity to get started and start your own thing.

***“Excellent, So with your career could you say there was a proudest moment for you excellent so we decree could you say that would be a proudest moment for you or is there a few highlights as you move through London, Melbourne – its been quite a journey.”***

I think probably what my proudest moment in many ways was becoming a mum - I've got three kids - Henry Zoe and Nicholas who attend agencies and that is by far my probably proudest career moment as a mother. if I talk about my corporate career, definitely being promoted to partner at IBM was a highlight and was a really big achievement and looking back on that I probably didn't think I celebrated enough so that's another thing that I think is really important. is that you celebrate your successes. They were probably two of my proudest moments.

***“So as a student or throughout your career, I think it's important that you do look back and reflect on your past moments. Is there anything you wished you did differently. For example for some students looking back, it might be doing a case competition, being exposed to different industries. Is there a moment you've learned from or upon reflection you could've done a bit differently?”***

I probably could have studied harder and it spent less time at Norton's but I think not really - I think it's just making sure that you meet as many people as you can – I was president of the FMAA when I was at uni to help expand and nationalize FMAA to a couple of different states – so that was a pretty great opportunity and I think in many ways exposure to doing some kind of leadership role like that while you're at university gives you some amazing experience that you can then capitalize on when you go through grad interviews and it gives you confidence that you've delivered something that's probably not dissimilar something you'd do in a corporate career. So I don't think there's anything that I wish I did differently – I was very happy I went to Melbourne Uni, I've since done an MBA at business school and I probably would not have been to do that without my undergraduate degree so I think just making the most of it – realizing when you're there that it's only a short time that most people at university for. It sounds cliché but they're probably the best days of your life so just get as much out of it as you can.

***“Moving on from beyond university and talking about extracurricular work – when you are progressing through the career do you think it's important that you do find that balance in work and that you still hold on to the things that you enjoy and really making your time to disconnect from work?”***

Absolutely! so I think being able to you know do exercise is incredibly important so in particular when you've got a busy executive career – being able to find time to carve it out for yourself. Exercise is something that I certainly have as a bit of a non-negotiable - I'm doing f45 at the moment – I'm probably not doing particularly well at it but I've been inspired by a couple of my team who have had some great results and I think it's really important to do things that you enjoy outside of work. I think as well my team recently did some volunteering at the Salvos in the home Evita Cafe which is just in Bourke Street and we all found that incredibly rewarding so finding some time to do something that gives you purpose or something that's professional to give back I think is really important to become a balanced person so whether you enjoy music or whether you enjoy sport or whether you enjoy doing reading - in being part of a book club – having something outside of work is absolutely critical to ensure that you can balance out your life - and also finding time with your family and friends.

***I think we've touched on briefly here and there about advice you give to students that it's a long road ahead and you shouldn't be set on one thing, so what advice would you give to students beginning their career journey or a first year that just started their Bachelor of Commerce – was maybe told by their parents to do it or thought it's all about money?”***

I think just pick subjects that you're going to enjoy, do all the core subjects that you have to because whilst you don't think they might be the most enjoyable subjects, they're really there for a reason. I think study hard, try and work hard in whatever you're doing whether it's a part time job, or an internship or if you're in a leadership role in a club at uni – just have a good time with your friends as well - it's a special time when you can enjoy going out and having a lot more free time when you're at university than you probably do any other time in your life. I would say ensure that you persist and really try hard and continue to be resilient - set yourself some ambitious goals and whether they're personal goals or whether they're academic goals and I think if you set yourself goals

more often than not you probably get closer to achieving whatever it is you want to do. I think if you kind of just meander along, often things don't get achieved or don't get done. If you want to get an h1 in a subject, set yourself that goal and make some time, carve it out in your life to do it. If you want to run a marathon or something, you've got to carve out time to become better at running. So I think my advice would be to just take on all new opportunities, never stop learning. I still continue to learn on a daily basis and I think when you stop learning and you have a closed mind it's pretty boring life! Embrace opportunities and make sure you meet as many people as you can from all walks of life - whether they're academic or corporate or family friends or wherever else you can meet people. I think networking is incredibly important and make the most of it!

***“So you've touched on networking and reach out to friends and family. Was there a mentor or someone you looked up to throughout your career? Or even through the university?”***

I probably looked up to my mother a lot. She's always worked very hard but I guess having informal mentors and mentors is really important. I think that the partner I work for at FreeHills - I continue to catch up with him a lot. some **xxxxxxx** is someone I've touched base with at different times in my career and there's certainly many people at IBM that I still consider mentors. I think having a mentor is really important and you've got to work out what you want to get out of that mentoring relationship. But at different times in your life in your career and in your study, you'll have different mentors for different reasons. So if you want to join a startup, go find someone in the startup community to talk to about it because mentoring is about identify things you want to achieve and having someone help you think of different ways that you can maybe do that or just bouncing ideas off them. At certain times in your career, I think working out who your personal board of directors is important - who do you have as your people who are going to help guide you on your career?

***“I think that's really important and having a personal board of directors is something that makes it a lot easier to think about and I think we have those people our lives naturally, it's just more so reaching out at them and understanding they're there to help-”***

And I think people genuinely are often really flattered to be asked to help and I think you get more out of it by actually speaking up and asking then not asking and I think you've got to sometimes ask people to make sure they know that you want to hear about things in their career or personal life that you found interesting and that you can leverage.

***“So I think we've touched on what you would give advice to a student, and your career probably hasn't taken the path that you thought about and you said if you could go back, maybe study a little bit harder. Is there something looking back as a student or if you're a student today that you'd tell yourself you'd do a bit differently or motivate yourself a little bit more so you can do that – is there something you can think of along those lines?”***

I spent a lot of time at the Bailieu library at Uni - not a lot of reference books were on file so probably spending more time at the Bailieu studying harder. Just make the most of being at uni – try to get as much out of it as you can. If you want to do a subject outside of commerce subject outside of commerce see if you can do that. If you want to do a post-grad after you finish your degree then contemplate doing that - I think it's just also getting out in the workforce is incredibly rewarding and it's kind of what you go to university for, so getting a grad job is absolutely critical. If you're presented with a grad opportunity, grab it with both hands and open arms, and make the most out of it and be successful at whatever you do.

***“Great, I think that's something we can all take away. Thankyou Olivia for joining today at the FMAA podcast. We really appreciate your insights and advice for students for their future.”***

My absolute pleasure!

***Thankyou!***