Graduates should you wait for the right job? Or accept any job?

It is an exciting time. You have succeeded in getting that hard worked for degree. You have thrown yourself a search for that first job opportunity. You have taken advice, polished your CV and at last, you are in touching distance of that first job offer.

But, in amongst that excitement, there is one question that you need to consider. Should I take that first job opportunity, or should I wait for the right job?

The last thing we want to do is dampen the excitement that comes with your first graduate job offer. But right now, you need to balance that excitement with realism.

Drawing on all our many years of experience, here are a couple of considerations you should be asking yourself.

# Am I panicking, slightly?

Following your graduation, there can come a lot on unexpected pressures. One of those will be to secure that first career opportunity. That pressure can come from family, friends or more often through the success of your peer group.

In 2020 those pressures are not helped by reading headlines like the following.

*New Graduates facing the toughest labour market in75 yeas.*

*At least 30% of university graduates have lost a job or an offer after the highest monthly increase in unemployment on record.*

*There are on average 100 graduates vying for each role*

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/29/help-springs-up-for-uk-graduates-facing-bleak-job-market>

But even allowing for these pressures the last feeling that you should have is one that should accept a job that is not right for you because you feel grateful.

Remember to put everything into perspective. You are going to be working for about 45 years, that is a roughly 9500 working days, and if you can find one opportunity that is not quite right, you can find another that is. Waiting another three months flipping burgers or serving in your local pub while you wait for your ideal job is not going to ruin your career.

You do not have to accept a job offer just because you feel lucky to have been offered one. It must be the right one.

Remember your first job leads you to your second, and third.

It isn't easy in the excitement of being offered a graduate role to think beyond it. But is this role setting you off in the right direction for your future career? Is this role going to set you up so you will meet and exceed your future aspirations? Is it a role or function that you want to work in?

Why does this matter? Well, you are not going to realise the importance of your first role until you come to apply for a second or third role.

It is not always easy to explain to a second prospective employer in 18 months that the first job you took was a mistake. The conversation will need to be along the lines of I have always wanted to work in Media, Manufacturing or Accountancy, and you now recognise your mistake in taking that first job.

Fortunately, in this era, most employers are slightly more forgiving and recognise mistakes happen on career paths, so it may not be insurmountable. Errors are repairable but not easily. But remember you will probably be competing with a new set of graduates who have a burning desire for that career path.

Shuffling sideways after 18 months or two years can be as hard as waiting for the right job in the first place.

Much better to be applying for your next role in 5 years that maintains your chosen career path and builds on the foundations you have laid because you picked your first job wisely.

Salary counter – getting well paid in your first job matters.

Ok, it is probably not your primary thought on receiving your first graduate job offer.

But just to put this in perspective. Let us take two graduates. The first secures a job on £22,000 the second on £25,000. Assume both increase their salaries at 4% per annum over their career.

Over the lifetime of your career, the second graduate is going to earn about £285,000 more than the first. Squeeze that initial offer to £27,000 and that figure compounds to £475,000—food for thought.

Ok, it is a compounding effect, and we know career paths change, job roles change, and external factors will make such a simplistic scenario highly unlikely. Some people choose vocational pathways and salary becomes secondary.

But for the majority, it is a point worth considering, your future earning trajectory is going to be based on your starting point.

Your colleagues are as important as your salary.

The most significant impact on you in your first role is going to be your work colleagues.

It would be best if you asked yourself some questions.

* As a business, do they invest in their graduates?
* Have they provided a personal development plan?
* Where are previous Graduates in the business now?
* How have they progressed?
* Is there a documented laid down plan for your future?

In this first role, the people you work with are going to be as valuable as your salary.

Does it excite you?

We have probably left the most challenging question to last. It is the toughest question because of its subjectivity. Only you know how you feel deep down about the opportunity in front of you.

But ask yourself,

* Does this role excite you, or is it the fact that you have a position that excites you?
* Think back to when you left University with your degree. If one of your friends had asked you what you were going to be doing in the future, what would you have said? And does that answer match up with the job description in front of you?

Final thoughts

Sometimes giving honest advice is tough.

We see our role as not to get graduate's jobs but to ensure we get individuals the right graduate role that projects them on their chosen career path. If you would like to discuss any aspect of your first job offer, please feel to give us a call and use our wealth of experience to your advantage.