



Joyce Guinness

Pip Cox's Oxford Media & Business School Graduation Day Speech

Wednesday 1st July 2015

What a fabulous and very hot day this is!

On behalf of all the agencies here, and especially Joyce Guinness, I'd like to thank Andrea and her team for inviting us to your Graduation Ceremony this afternoon. Having grown up near Oxford and gone to school here I am feeling rather nostalgic.

I stand here today surrounded by some very proud people; parents, family and friends - congratulations and well done to all of you who are graduating. What a landmark occasion this is. You too should be proud of yourselves.

Years ago, when I was a student, Oxford Media Business School existed but under a different name. One of my greatest friends, Alex came here and, after graduating, moved straight up to London, secured her first job as a Team Assistant and quickly progressed into a PA role. Years down the line she has had a very successful career having worked for some big names in media, and is now EA to the CEO of Virgin Media.

She would be the first person to say that it was the course, amongst other things, that helped get her to where she is today.

We, and I think each of the agencies represented today, have a long list of very happy and successful placements of OMBS students, including some who have even come to work for us.

I have been closely associated with OMBS for over 12 years and have great pleasure in working with Andrea and her team. We have helped many students by giving them career advice and placing them in jobs. It is always nice to be the one who picks up the phone to give the good news, hearing squeals of delight from the other end of the line and waiting for the squeals to subside before saying, "I take it, that's a yes then"!

We have stayed in contact with many of the students and have helped some of the older ones further into their careers to find their second or even third job. The reputation of OMBS is such that a lot of clients now ask for OMBS on a CV.

Recently we organised work experience for some students and the feedback from our clients was glowing. One client in particular said that the student "demonstrated a good amount of self-reliance and initiative. She was one of the best interns they have ever had".

The other week I came to Oxford with two colleagues, Jessie and Lucy to interview some students who are looking to move to London and start their career search. We were very impressed by all of them - they were keen to get a job and prepared to work hard to achieve this. On the way back to London we agreed that the students this year were second to none, having done their preparation before meeting us, knowing about our company and the kind of posts we look to fill. They had made a huge effort and came armed with questions, gave good answers to ours and displayed confidence in their personal ability. It was a really productive day and one we all enjoyed. I am pleased to say that already some students have been hopping on the Oxford Tube in their smart interview gear with a few already having secured a job!

So the academic year is now over and you are sitting here on your Graduation Day. The celebrations are no doubt in full flow but it is now coming to the time when you need to start thinking about the future and working out what you are going to do next. I know that some of you already have jobs lined up and well done to those of you who have. For those of you who haven't, don't panic, take a well-deserved break to consider your options.

You can all be justifiably proud of yourselves in successfully completing this course which has given you a multitude of not only secretarial skills but also expertise on subjects that are becoming ever more important in the work place, such as E-marketing.

You have also been very fortunate to have been tutored by a dedicated team of staff who have taken pride in their work and willing you to succeed.

So you have the skills, what else? Well we all know it's not just about skills, it is also about how you portray yourself; your body language, presentation, communication. All of these factors count. Always do your best and be true to yourself. You will be surprised how good this makes you feel – and I don't just mean this when it comes to work, it applies to life in general.

There will inevitably be tricky times ahead and difficult choices to make but life would be very dull if it all went so smoothly. Don't shy away from such choices - face them head on as in the long run they will make you a stronger and more compassionate person. Mistakes will be made - don't worry, learn from them. There will be times when you have just had enough. Stress not, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Always try and turn it into something positive, you'll end up feeling a lot better about yourself and more confident.

I graduated from Northumbria, albeit a few years ago now, with a degree not too dissimilar to this course and I was delighted to find that prospective employers were crying out for the skills which I had learnt. Perhaps I should point out that I then did go travelling round the world for 2 years BUT with the backing of my degree I did manage to fund my travels by picking up office temp roles and contracts.

Through successfully completing a course similar to this, working hard and trying always to give it my best shot, I now run my own company and sit on a board of another.

Businesses cry out for PA's and office staff who have had the chance to learn the skills and qualifications that this course covers. You are stepping into a world of opportunity and no doubt into some very well-known and large FTSE100 companies. I'd say it's all about getting into the right company and then working hard to carve your future. Find a company that fits you; the right ethos, a friendly team. Becoming a PA can open so many doors and gives you an amazing insight into a business. A boss truly relies on his or her PA; they expect you to become their eyes and ears. It is a very rewarding job and high regarded one too.

When it comes to your first day you will always be a bit nervous. Picking up the phone for the first time can be daunting; trying to remember the name of the company, let alone if it's morning or afternoon! Don't forget though, everyone has had to go through this process so you won't be on your own. We all had to start somewhere.

You are lucky to be joining the job market at this time. I think everyone here on stage will agree that recently limitless opportunities have arisen in an accelerating market. You have your whole career ahead of you so make the most of it.

These are exciting times and whatever career path you choose, embrace it with enthusiasm. Be a good listener, considerate to others and, above all, take pride in your work. Have fun!

GOOD LUCK!

www.joycequinness.co.uk