George

28:34 + 13:29 = 42:03

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George:

George: OK, well I think the transition from school to I guess quote/unquote "the real world" was, I guess it was a little bit more difficult than I had expected it to be. I don't think schools in general do a great job of preparing people for the actual real world. I mean they do a good job of teaching kids a lot of, you know, theoretical things that you can use and analyze what you see around you in your world, but when using those skills in order to have an impact on day-to-day operation of your life, I think that is a problem with some schools, including the Midwest University. But I noticed like when I took the Bridge program originally, that really helped prepare me for the real school world, but there is no such thing as like a Bridge program to transition me to the real working adult world. So that was a little difficult I'd say for me.

and now I'm working for myself on developing a Web site. So I think those are things that I've noticed right now that people are doing and kids are doing what they can do, things that they just never really thought about while they were at school. And they have to experience all this in order to really I guess get a grasp of the real working world.

George: Yeah with the exception of, I suppose, the science and engineering, the core STEM degrees where the average starting salary's around like maybe eighty-five to a hundred thousand dollars for a very good starting salaries for people in these really, I guess, in these types of programs where they need a lot of people, the arts and like stuff in the literature, the sciences, and the arts, generally speaking, I think people go out, they leave school thinking that they're going to get higher starting salaries than they're getting. What I've noticed in my interviews is they don't need to pay people as much money because there's so many people looking for work. And people, there is someone who maybe comes from a wealthier family, who will help support someone moving to a D.C. or a New York or L.A. or San Fran. But, you know, so they can live off a maybe thirty-five thousand a dollar year salary, whereas realistically if they were doing it on their own they would need to make at least probably fifty grand. So I've noticed that a lot. I've noticed a lot of places I've been to in like a D.C. or a New York, especially, for me, diversity is lacking as well. Just because I think it just seems that people typically come from these wealthier families in these entry level positions where they're not making very much money, which I think has been rather startling to me and something that I didn't quite expect when I went to the working world.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a good point, because it sounds like it's an adjustment.

George: Exactly. I've also noticed that people are very expendable. There doesn't seem to be very much, I don't really know the word, but uh, what would you say….

Interviewer: Like loyalty?

George: Yeah, there's not much more loyalty any more in companies. Or at least smaller companies that you're just kind of like a number. You know, you do your job and you do it well, and we'll promote you after maybe a year, year and a half, two years. But uh do everything the right way. So I just notice there's not much loyalty, not much really use in keeping people where they're at, it seems like.

Interviewer: Yeah, was there anything that did happen that you had thought of and it's connected with your degree?

George: Yes, yes, I was able to, when I interviewed for the Democratic National Committee, the interviewer told me that they were really familiar with the Midwest University, with my degree program too as being one of the top three in what I got it in in American politics, and I was hired to work on the strategic communication for the president's campaign. I was able to meet the President and the First Lady doing that and also do a lot of great networking events in Washington, D.C. that I would not have had the opportunity of doing had I not gotten the degree that I had.

Interviewer: Oh, got it. Awesome. I'm going to move to question two. As you transitioned from school to work, what social support and strategies did you use for navigate in life after college that you found was particularly helpful?

George: I used a lot of, well I moved to a city I suppose where I didn't know anybody. So I think that was a little bit difficult for me. Even though you think like New York, I guess I did know technically a few people, but not really enough to give me a great social life. So I went to

different apps online and just met people that way,

applications that is. Met people that way. Went to different networking happy hours and made a habit of hanging with people at my level at work too on the weekends.

Interviewer: Did you find anything especially challenging in terms of social support?

George: Uh, not necessarily challenging, but oftentimes the bigger the city, the lonelier that you *can* feel. So, I think adjusting to saying no to some of the pressures of going out all the time and doing stuff like that was a bit more difficult for me. You know, I moved new to the city, but I could not to 2 a.m. every single day. It was getting very difficult. So learning how to say, just how to say no and not feeling left out, but realizing that that's a decision that you made yourself I think has been a good thing for me. And I feel that, you know, my friendships have then suffered because of that, and it's just the way I learned to deal with stuff. I just don't give in to all the pressure all the time now.

Interviewer:

George: That was one of the things that was a little bit difficult. I struggled for a long time trying to find a type of employment. Had I not had financial support from my family to do all these internships I did, oftentimes unpaid, I probably never would have had the types of jobs I've had and had the same type of opportunities I've had. So I think helping people find jobs after college, after they get their degree, or even during college, maybe during their late junior year or into your senior year, aside from just like the blind resume drops and career fairs. If you don't

a job at one of those, what are you going to do after you graduate? So that was always something I noticed that really was never addressed at the schools.

Interviewer: Cause you're right, cause I do remember you doing a lot of internships, what I wasn't aware is that they were unpaid.

George: Some of them were; some of them weren't. The really good ones typically were paid. I took a couple that were technically unpaid, but I was funded by fellowships programs too, which are really difficult to get. So unless you have connections and stuff like that, those are also really hard to get.

Interviewer:

George: I think some of the basic things that I was able to learn, you know, policy analysis and stuff like that, at least for the internships I've taken, were very beneficial to me. But the day-to-day routine of making sure that I get up, go to work, and do a good job for nine hours at a time, versus just, you know, maybe an hour, hour and a half here and there throughout the day was just a little bit, was a little more of a challenge than I had expected it to be, which wasn't necessarily a bad thing. I think that's what internships are for, to teach you how to do those kinds of things once you get out of school. But, I'm sorry what was the actual question again?

Interviewer:

George: Well, I know a lot of my friends, and especially myself, like I'm doing a Web site right

now, which I've had no experience in any Web site coding or anything, fundraising or anything like that. But this group of kids and me who just came

together, we saw like this common cause of issues in, you know, our community. And we're doing this Web site. It's like a type of social network. That was something we just never thought about doing. So I've noticed that people are getting jobs in fields that are not directly related to their degrees anymore it seems like. I did Political Science. I'm not really doing politics at the moment. I have done politics before. I think I should go back to it after a couple more years of experience. But it is difficult, a lot of people, like if you get a degree in like English, or say you get a degree in chemistry, you're not the top ten percent of the class, what are you going to do with that degree? So, I think that's something that people really think about. One of my friends for instance, got a degree in chemistry, but his GPA was about 2.8, which wasn't great, especially for that type of degree that you need to have super, you know, hyper-specialized knowledge in order to really make an impact. So he still has not found a job. So that's just an example of what can happen if you pick the wrong major and don't think through what you're doing. So I guess my advice would be pick the major that will get you a job in that field that you think [unclear].

Interviewer: And I like that point. So like when you look at the job market and the economy, a couple of things, do you think that has impacted the transition that young people are experiencing from school to work right now?

George: I'm sorry, so from the job market….

Interviewer: Yeah, when you look at the job market and the economy, and, you know, that transition of using degrees, do you think that's a direct impact to why maybe

people are not using the degrees to get the job? Or do you think there's something else?

George: People see like the Mark Zuckerbergs with Facebook and the Twitters of the universe and Amazon and say "Well maybe I can make something like that myself." So I really think that people are looking at that and saying, "If I can't do what I want to do, I might as well do something that is also interesting to me that can also have a financial benefit for myself." I think I've noticed that a lot in people now.

George: [Cross talk] Well just me understand the question. You're asking…what…I'm sorry, can you just repeat the question one more time? I'm just trying to understand.

George: I think part of the reason that I got into this start-up in the first place and started to do it was so I could maybe use that just like as a way, and just like maybe a way to just network with people and talk to them and meet influential people in industry and just talk to them about the idea that I had, what I'm working on. So, for instance, I'm working with 15 people right now through the core, or actually 21 people, but there's a core of 15, then there's 8 co-founders, which is what I am. And a lot of us, they're all in school right now, haven't been able to find really many jobs. The only internships that they're looking for are unpaid. So they're just kind of thinking outside the box. Like one girl's interested in English. I'm interested in Politics. Another

person's interested in Social Justice, all of which are difficult to get a job in. So this Web site that we're working on is really to help

bridge the gap. It's really help to connect the people who are going through the coming-out process for being gay with other people who have gone through it, to help support them as people. So the girl who works on the English helps write the Web site, I do the policy of it, working laterally with supportive of the Human Rights campaign, and stuff like that and also the [unclear] Project. And the person interested in Social Justice is really all hands on board, because she's really interested in that type of social work in general. So here's like three pretty different functional or, I guess, majors that we all got, but we're working on something together. So we're all trying to find our own interests within this group, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, and that's good because it sounds like you've found a way to bring in all of your strengths, and you're maximizing the capital among this group. So that's a really great way to bounce back, absolutely. [A: Exactly] Let's see. OK, a couple of more questions. OK, so George, the other question is what do you think we could do to improve that transition from school to work for new graduates coming out of college?

George: I think one problem that I've noticed, and I'll get to the point of improving it, is I think people look at a major and say, "OK this is what they do; this is what they know." But I also write. I'm not an English major, but I know how to write. I'm doing business write now, but I

don't have a B.A. And the only thing I really have to my name would be a Political Science degree. But that's not really at all encompassing of the person that I am or what I can bring to the table for a possible employer. So I think one people, or I guess schools, could do is perhaps

add more [unclear] or make it I guess a bit simpler to get minors or even at the Midwest University like certificates and stuff that you're good at, like you have a passion for, but maybe not a lot of time to get a full major in. But I think if people saw that qualifier to your name on your resume, I think they'd look at it and be like, "Oh well, he worked for the DNC, a couple of lobbying firms, and did defense and financial services lobbying internship, maybe he knows something about business. So let's talk to him." And if I had like a qualifier of maybe from the Roth School a certificate I completed three courses there or something, I think that would really help me get my foot in the door in different industries that I had not thought of in the first place. Or that I wouldn't get in originally.

Interviewer: So you're saying like a few ways to improve it is probably like some certificates to supplement like a major?

George: Exactly, exactly. Especially in the arts programs.

Interviewer: Right, arts and sciences. Yeah, I think you're right. And it's kind of interesting. It sounds like there's a few of that, it's starting to happen a little bit more. So I guess we're learning a lot more. We're not moving as quick, but definitely I think I do see some changes in that certificates and new minors that people can complement with their Arts and Science degree. [A: Exactly] Now, George, here is what I thought would be interesting, because, you know, I worked

with you for so long. In terms of like your own development and I've seen you from Day One here, and it's still exciting to see you come to this portion of your own development. When

you look at the whole transition from school to work, what areas do you think you've grown, what roles do you think you have changed or have grown in, and even like new responsibilities, are there responsibilities that you do now that you almost had to renegotiate because the transition sort of mandates that?

George: Yeah I think from having had, I guess, my college paid for to being now essentially independent from my parents I think was a big transition for me. I think also another big transition was just actually just working in the real world. Like really, that was just a little bit weird, doing this, I'm saying, "OK, this is your life now, every single day doing this kind of thing." And even in the short year of being in the real, like I guess the quote/unquote "real world," I've noticed that that was just, you know, I think that was just from outside influences telling me that, but I don't think that's really necessarily the way it has to be. If someone said to me, I guess even in June when I first moved to like even New York that I would be doing a tech start-up company and interviewing for those types of actual jobs in New York City, I would have probably laughed and say, "There's no way. I'm probably going to go back to D.C." But now just being here and talking to people and like looking at the kind of things that I *can* do and that I'm good at and using my skills and my experiences I've learned throughout my life for different industry, I think it's something that I've really, really learned, that it really is, like the world really is yours to be able to make how you want. And you can do whatever you want. It's something I really learned just probably within the last month, that I really can do whatever the heck I want to do. [A: Awesome] The only thing really stopping me is me, so I think that's really a….

Interviewer: OK, and you come from a very empowering position. So when there are points of confusion, so how do you handle that? In what ways you handle like when among the transition there are times of confusion, how do you handle that?

George: Well, when I first got laid off from the job, I was very, very nervous, wondering how I'm going to pay for my apartment, what I'm going to do, am I ever going to work in politics again? Am I going to have to do PR [accounts?] that I really don't enjoy, but at least I have some type of a skill set in? And really what I had to do was I had to sit down, as they say "relax," go the coffee shop and apply. And I was reading a lot and I was learning a lot even in a week or two of having been [unclear] out of a job, and say "OK, I got this and I can do this." And just sitting down and talking to people, I've already had people calling me for interviews and it hasn't even really been a month yet. So I'm really I think just looking forward, I'm actually, I'm using this as like an opportunity to just really empower myself and just view things in a different way, things I might not have thought about doing previously. And that doesn't mean I'm abandoning my passion for like politics or policy. It just means I'm reevaluating, I guess, the reality of my situation, which is not necessarily a negative thing at all. It's actually very exciting for me.

George: Well, you know, a lot of the people on it right now are actually still in school that they have just realized that they've been applying for internships now that are paid that they can't, they can barely even get and they're still very qualified. So the, the idea came around about a year and a half ago. In the past eight months though is really when we've been really just kind of

actually noticed internally at my old company that there were some issues with the management and the leadership at the company. And I was actually talking to my parents about this. “I don’t know how long this particular opportunity is going to last for.” So they said, “Well, do you have any ideas for maybe other stuff after if something happens to this job?” And I did, and it’s what we’re doing now. So the people who are working on it, who are some of the kids like I said are still in college, are just now accepting the fact that, you know, there is some issue in the real world. So this might be not a bad thing to do right now and try to make our own job. So we’re doing fundraising, we’re doing something called Indi Go Go campaign with the goal of raising 50,000 dollars to help launch it. That will be launched on February 1st. So we’re really, really, really working hard at accomplishing this, not just for ourselves to say we did it, but also really the goal is just really to have this research help people. But I do think that there were some [motives?], when other people had joined in on this that they need to help themselves as well and this might be a great way to do it.

George: Yeah, I think that they’re, they have a bit of advantage, I guess, in that regard to me. Because I went in thinking that everything would be fine. Some of my friends in the Engineering Department, a lot actually almost every one of my friends in like the Engineering Department and the Mathematics and the Sciences, got jobs in December or January. And then I started applying the same time, I was like, “OK, this is probably the right time to do it.” December came, January came, then February, March, you know, April. Then May came and I graduated.

I'm like, "OK, I still don't have a job." I'm like, "Well it's OK, you can now start applying

even more." I'm like "Well, you know, I've been applying and I wish I could have something to go to after I graduate." And I didn't. So I did think, what do the people who don't have family here who are living from paycheck to paycheck and who have taken out student loans to even afford like their housing, what are they doing if they were in my position? And I looked at my resume, and I know that there are people who are much, much, much, much worse off than I ever was and ever will be. So that is really what I thought of when I first couldn't find a job, like what are these kids doing? I think that's really, that's where I think that it's good that the people I'm working with are realizing that there's something wrong with the economy right now and that they're doing what they can. And if they choose to go to a private job after they graduate and if this experience helps them land that job, that's great too. None of it's really a bad thing.

George: It's scary for a lot of people. I've told, you know, I mentor a couple of kids in the city here, and I tell them if you have like the math or the science mind, definitely do that. I definitely, definitely, definitely recommend doing that even if you're not as interested in that as maybe say English. But I really, just for the job prospects, I would highly recommend doing that is what I tell them. And I think that a lot of people are now abandoning their true passion for doing stuff just to make ends meet. And I think that's not good for the future of the country or for individuals at all.

George: Uh, I think maybe, oh that's difficult. I mean that's so hindsight. And, you know, as a

person I've matured myself. Uh, I notice girls know what they want to do a lot quicker than the guys anyway typically. They're just a little more mature, I

hear. But I think helping to pull that out…. I got so bogged down on having to take classes that had an effect on my GPA, like doing like different science classes and math classes that I just knew one hundred percent, one hundred percent, that I was just not good at. I would much rather have had like two tracks, like one for the people who can do the math and can do the science, and here's what you can do or like another one, like here's a business entrepreneur class with a different type of math. I think that would have been a little bit better for me to like say I did this type of class and this type of class in college, versus instead of saying I did a Biology 101 or a Math 102. I think that that type of class would have been a much more, much better for my development personally. So something like that.

George: More like tailored to individual versus like generalized requirements. I don't think people are, shouldn't be generalized like that anyway.

George: Yeah exactly, exactly. I think maybe, I think there's two different types of students. I think one type of student has opportunities like I had, the other type doesn't. I think the people who don't have the opportunity are the ones who should really be focused on, not necessarily me. I won't ever really have to like want for anything in my life, which is a great luxury. But I do realize that I'm not the norm in that sense. I think that we need to look at like these kids who come from like the Detroit Public Schools and haven't had the type of experiences that I've had and don't have the opportunities for those type of experiences. I think they do a great job of giving scholarships and stuff like that. But I don't think there's anything wrong with like

helping to fund a few students in Political Science like work for John Dingell, the congressman in Ann Arbor. I think that

would be a very great thing that the school could do and that would be really beneficial, I think, to the Congressman himself. I think English, we have some great authors, I think maybe if they came over here and talked to students about their experiences and just being able like maybe sit down with a few people from [unclear] or *The Ann Arbor News* and say "How did you get this type of job?" I think that would be good for them. I think giving like individual, like I think it really is at the department level, giving like individual, noticing what individuals need, based off what like their major is. So if someone in the sciences has a less than stellar GPA, if it's not like a 3.8 or above, and they're not going to look into medical school, well what are you going to do now if you cannot find a job in chemistry? What can you do? I think that's really a huge question and burden that I think schools are going to have to figure out and talk about soon. Cause it's not helping anyone that these kids are unemployed.