

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS

FINANCIAL TIMES Thursday November 24 2011

www.exec-appointments.com

www.ft.com/recruit

Young and jobless: the voice of one in a million

Jazz Jagger reflects on what choosing a career means to the youngsters struggling to find work

Youth unemployment is at an all-time high and the young of today – including me – are starting to reassess the meaning of this term “career”.

It has become a strange animal for anyone aged 24 and under, as it sits staring at us, smugly. When adults ask us, as children: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” the

emphasis is on the “be” – what path will shape your identity as your limbs develop and you start to wear stiff clothes.

But self-identity is a touchy subject for today’s graduates, who are likely to be on the dole, scrounging off their parents and feeling worthless for doing so: broken pride, diminishing self-worth and financial despair bottled up in their old bedroom back at home. We are tempted to knock back beakers of Talisker at the thought of the cheques to be made payable to the ever-present student loan company.

Meanwhile, our qualifications are being laughed at over polished table-



Nice work if you can get it: Ben Southall won a competition to work as a caretaker on an island off Australia

PA

Is youth unemployment a top priority? How difficult is it for anyone to find a job? Email your thoughts to: recruitment@ft.com

tops by grown-ups in stiff suits and beads or cufflinks.

As the 200th impassioned covering letter and CV is tossed into the bin, we think: “To hell with this – as a lowly arts graduate with a pointless degree, perhaps I could afford to be a bit more creative about career possibilities than my more sensible vocational buddies.”

So how about working as a baker? As many iced buns as you can eat? Or there are people who get paid to test water slides in holiday resorts. Or farming – farmers are supposed to be the happiest of all workers. And in 2009 someone won a job as a caretaker on a paradise island for six months. You can’t say no to that.

Back in the real world, my friends have worked as refuse collectors and behind the counter at McDonald’s since leaving university.

That’s still far preferable to being a miserable tethered intern. A friend, after two years of interning that cost her hundreds of pounds and an unhealthy accumulation of cynicism, even heard one of her bosses chortle that “they” (interns) were “like meercats – so eager!”. Everyone in the office thought this was funny.

She didn’t. She was just sent off to make more coffee.

Perhaps there’s no such thing as a

Google? It looks fun, crazy, the future?

Then I spoke to an occupational psychologist, Simon Draycott at Mendas career coaching, who said money and fame were definitely not the answers. “Of course, you’re right, you’re completely right,” I retracted, not entirely convinced. We only say these things to psychologists so that we don’t look like money-grabbing wasters – or so I thought.

But it turns out to be true – research shows that money just doesn’t add up to happiness. Salary, bonuses, worldwide adoration – these things are “hygiene factors” in psychological terms – they please us up to a point, but without more substance we soon feel empty again.

“It’s about challenge,” says Simon Lutterbie, an astute DPhil in social psychology from the iOpener Institute of People and Performance. “It’s one of the great psychological findings that we are at our happiest when we are on the brink of achieving something.”

AA Milne summed up this trait, too: “Well,” said Pooh. ‘What I like best..’ and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you

Inside this issue

Awkward truth can be a positive

A reader asks whether to cover up a gap in their CV. Our experts recommend honesty

Page 2



Nine key tasks for successful women

Our guest columnist has conducted research into how females can hurdle the barriers they face

Page 3

An academic who is ‘keeping it real’



Interview: Murray Steele always takes his own business experience into the classroom

Page 3

Chief Financial Officer/Finance Director

Attractive compensation including expatriate benefits • Middle East

The company is one of the largest independent automotive distributors in the world, and one of the most respected names in the Middle East. Over many decades, it has built one of the region’s most admired businesses, with a persistent focus on high quality service, spare parts, financing and related activities.

The company is one of the largest non-banking financial intermediaries in the MENA region that is focused on auto financing. It has embarked on a programme to leverage this strong base to build a full complement of consumer finance activities, including mortgages, insurance and personal loans. We seek a CFO for this business, as well as Finance Directors for the individual consumer finance activities.

Candidates should be qualified Financial Officers with a background in financial services. They

should be highly numerate, entrepreneurial and attracted by the opportunity to become financial partners in a growing business supported by one of the strongest commercial platforms in the Middle East.

For further information on how to apply, please visit www.rresponses.com

RUSSELL REYNOLDS ASSOCIATES

“dream job” any more. I told my father I was into books and liked the way they were worked on and laid out. “Book publishing is a dying industry,” he boomed.

People in advertising always seem fairly happy – or is that because they become so good at selling that they sell themselves to themselves? And those bankers pop a lot of champagne corks. Or what about shiny, sparkling

were, but he didn't know what it was called.”

Are a million young unemployed people on the brink of achieving something? If so, what might it be? When I left university I felt on that brink. Since then, I've decided that firing off CVs and Post-It-note stacking do not count as legitimate working challenges. Surely there now has to be some kind of honey involved.

Recruitment diary

The job interview might begin from the moment you walk in

Page 3