



Following on from last month's introduction to the series of Chatterbox business features we are turning our attention to employability and careers – particularly with regards to 14-19 year olds.

As a Chief Executive of a Midlands manufacturing business I would often dread new recruits coming through the door. What I found was often a clear lack of work ethic, communication skills and 'can do' attitudes whether they were university graduates or school leavers. Of course not all people starting out on their career path should be tarnished with the same brush but it does raise a couple of issues:

1. How are we supporting young people with their careers?
2. What does 'employability' mean and how do young people increase their chances of finding suitable jobs?

“Reaching individual potential is vital – whatever that potential is”

I certainly feel that our school years should include lessons to help better 'prepare people for life'.

Scrap "careers advice" and start including cash flow management, how to buy a house, what children's core strengths are, what rejection and competition is like, how to network and build relationships, real communication, problem solving and so on. Surely our children should be given meaningful support rather than "you like maths therefore you should be an accountant" or even worse "you haven't done very

well in anything so why not try construction".

Teachers and university tutors often lack real industry experience themselves so surely we should start encouraging them to take flexible secondments into businesses and organisations to see what it's like in the world they are promoting to youngsters and bring industry into education?

Just take a moment to think about the path we all travel from nursery, through school, possibly on to higher education and to our careers. What influenced you? Was it due to your parent's power of persuasion and expectations? Is it society that dictated what we should do? Are choices made because of a favourite teacher? There seem to be so many reasons for the various doors we find, open and sometimes close. And then you might think about your own 'Careers Advisor'

This was someone that, like with my own experience, had neither a 'career' nor be an 'advisor'.

As a parent with our eldest son just in his first year of secondary education I find it rather alarming that this poor level of support is still exists. When I was at school there seemed to be two categories when receiving advice... A) for those showing some reasonable intelligence and B) the rest. If you fell into the A's, you were told to go and get a job in bank or at an estate agency and if you were a B then the route was factory work, shelf stacker or on a check out. If you'd had a Saturday job then the advice was 'see if they will give you a job'.

So it's not a great start to anyone's future. In speaking with professional colleagues and associates we've all agree about this and so it seems to me that change is long overdue. I've supported

young entrepreneurs and their development for a number of years - but now I realise that there's the stage before that when the spark of leadership and entrepreneurship starts to flicker – surely our job should be to add to this so that great things can happen and the spark's can burn brightly. For those that won't ever be entrepreneurs, they still deserve support to be great employees and to be happy and content.

It's a hugely competitive market out there, especially at the moment, so we should really prepare young people more effectively. When thinking of what employers are looking for, it's simple:

“We want people that will provide a return on investment”

In simple terms, this means driven, hard working, committed and trustworthy individuals that can problem solve and get on with customers, suppliers, colleagues etc. as well as being able to take responsibility. Most employers will describe their best employees with such descriptions rather than what qualification they have.

I have to say that courtesy and manners were something I always looked for – whether it was for a cleaner or director! It's true, they don't cost anything.

For more information you can visit <http://www.danisaveker.com> or <http://www.jeevesservices.com>.

If you'd like to contact Dani Saveker directly you can email her at dani@danisaveker.com

This is part of a series of business based features and next month we will be discussing 'customer service'.