

THE BLOG

Future Sound: How We Must Pave The Way For Tomorrow's Talent

🕒 23/09/2016 11:53



Carole Humphrey 
Founder and MD, GCRS

September always feels like a fresh start. The last rays of summer are disappearing, schools are back and after a no doubt heady few months of post-graduation partying, the next generation of young professionals are finally heading into a fiercely competitive professional world.

I'm often impressed by the calibre of graduates who come through our doors looking for their first step on the ladder. Bright, enthusiastic candidates who have clear ambition to follow in the footsteps of the experts who have made the British sound industry what it is.

However, we've also been lucky enough to have some brilliantly talented young people make their first tentative steps on the career ladder who have not been through academic training. Many of our sound designers have excelled without a degree - Raja Seghal, Munzie Thind, Ben Leeves - and I'm a firm believer in learning on the job. Academic training is great, but you don't need to have a degree to go far in our industry.

Sound design is one of the few careers where recruits can still go straight from school or college. If they succeed in their apprenticeship then they could land one of the most exciting creative jobs in the world, which can bring very generous financial rewards. What may start as a hobby could develop into a vocational calling. Sound design is a vocation in the truest sense, a career imbued by craft skills that are really only honed in the studio.

Vocational training has an incredibly important place in building the foundations of a skilled workforce, so the UK government's ongoing commitment to reviving this route with the promise of [3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020](#) should not be taken lightly. Apprenticeships can be a hugely rewarding and effective route into the professional world, and it is a process I fundamentally believe in as the bedrock of our industry.

Supporting young talent is something I have always felt incredibly passionate about. Working with tomorrow's industry lynchpins from their formative years onwards is an approach that has great worth, and one I believe can be applied in any working environment with exceptional success. Nurturing juniors from an early stage is critical to developing brilliant managers and senior staff. Every sound designer at [GCRS](#) started their career as a runner in the kitchen, being mentored through every stage. Doing this among a group of contemporaries encourages learning and healthy competition. Shared experiences are what make teams stronger and encourage longevity; seven of the eight sound designers at GC have been with the business for over 10 years.

Academic training and theory are important, but in reality much of what is taught bears minimal relevance to the actual processes; often there is an element of 'unlearning' involved in the workplace. To me, having a raft of young, ambitious juniors working through the ranks and learning collectively on the job is of as much, if not more, value. Being a runner doesn't sound very glamorous, but it prepares the team for a career in a service industry, working collaboratively to hone the skills necessary to survive in a fast paced, high pressure environment.

The UK has a strong reputation for producing outstanding sound design; we have some of the world's best recording studios and designers producing exceptional audio for global productions. So, it is of the utmost importance we maintain this level of excellence through enabling enthusiastic and motivated young people without placing a degree at the top of the list of 'desirable skills'. We should not deny opportunities based on academic achievement as quite frankly there are a multitude of reasons that prevent young people from taking this route - financial, social, personal - that should have no bearing whatsoever on their ability to be a brilliant sound designer.

Looking at the future of our workforce, we are seeing an influx of brilliantly talented young people who are eager to learn and incredibly motivated. Millennials are a powerful generation of workers who show incredible passion and drive. Our industry and indeed the wider world of commerce is on the cusp of an exciting evolution as ambitious, hungry millennials enter the professional arena and shape the world of work for years to come. We have a responsibility to each and every one to ensure the right training, resources, environment and opportunities are within their grasp. If we do this well, there future of the sound industry will be in safe hands.

Follow Carole Humphrey on Twitter: www.twitter.com/GCRS