

UCEM in conversation with... Josh Olney – Episode 5

Andrew Belt: Welcome to the fifth episode of our UCEM in conversation with... podcast where I am joined by Joshua Olney – AKA The Apprenticeship Guy.

Hi Josh.

Josh Olney: Hi Andrew.

Andrew Belt: How are you?

Josh Olney: I'm well, thanks.

Andrew Belt: So, The Apprenticeship Guy. What is it?

Josh Olney: The Apprenticeship Guy is a resource channel that offers advice and tips on apprenticeships and the mindset needed to go through one. Primarily, it is targeted at school and college leavers as they would benefit the most from knowing the information I share. It is also an area for apprentices to share their experiences, with a look to improving the apprenticeship route for apprentices and companies.

Andrew Belt: Why did you start it?

Josh Olney: I started this channel because I believe my experience so far is worth sharing. I didn't really know what I wanted to do when leaving college. I had a rough idea of my long-term goal, but I didn't know how to get there. I then had a conversation with an older mate of mine who persuaded me to do an apprenticeship. Since then, I have come on leaps and bounds as a person and I want to give something back.

I have seen nothing similar on social media regarding apprenticeship advice and actual living experiences. It is a resource I wish I had access to when I was making my first career step after leaving college.

Andrew Belt: What do you hope to achieve with The Apprenticeship Guy?

Josh Olney: I want The Apprenticeship Guy to be the go-to channel for school and college leavers when thinking about early career steps. It may be that I venture out and cover university learning as well, but for now I am sticking with apprenticeships.

A goal of mine is completing presentations on mental health and apprenticeships for Year 12/13 students across the UK. How I balance that with work, is something I haven't yet discussed. I also hope to partner with companies like Arcadis to promote their apprenticeships and be the link between students and companies.

Andrew Belt: You've mentioned the YouTube channel and, so far, you've recorded two videos – one detailing a day in the life of an apprentice project manager during lockdown and the second highlighting the positives and negatives of an apprenticeship.

What content and videos do you have in the pipeline?

Josh Olney: I have got a series starting soon where I will be hosting a Q&A with others about their apprenticeships, whilst doing some kind of activity. For example, my first video of this series will be me and a mate of mine playing Football Manager [football management simulation video game] and discussing his apprenticeship. I want to expand on this and complete a video for every type of apprenticeship role available in the UK.

Andrew Belt: You're currently studying on UCEM's Chartered Surveyor apprenticeship on the project management pathway while working as an apprentice project manager at Arcadis.

How are you finding the apprenticeship so far?

Josh Olney: Enjoyable. I've met some fantastic people and had some wonderful experiences. Don't get me wrong, it is challenging. But if it wasn't, I would be asking if it was all worth it. I hated my final couple years at school and battled anxiety throughout college. My apprenticeship has really helped me grow mentally as an individual. Without it, I wouldn't be half the person I am now.

Andrew Belt: Most of your studying with us will be online. How have you found our online learning?

Josh Olney: I enjoy learning this way. The content I learn is very similar to how I learn at work. I am given a task and I have to balance my time effectively to ensure I get it done. I like being able to work at my own speed, in the comfort of my home. Of course, I have missed out on the social interaction, but my apprenticeship has more than made up for that. The tutors have been extremely helpful, and I am enjoying learning something new about each topic.

Andrew Belt: How are you supported by UCEM staff on your apprenticeship?

Josh Olney: We hold meetings every 10 weeks to talk about my apprenticeship and university progress. I have also had meetings with tutors of each module to ensure I am keeping on track. Everyone I have spoke to so far has been really helpful and genuinely cares about your progress.

Andrew Belt: What are your career aspirations?

Josh Olney: They've jumped around a lot to be honest. At 10, I wanted to be an architect and live in Australia. Now I want to manage the design and construction of stadium projects. I also have another aspiration - being an ambassador for mental health, especially for young people. That is part of why The Apprenticeship Guy is here.

I want it to be a positive platform for young people to look at and see an example of someone who was able to overcome some extremely challenging times. My career aspiration isn't becoming the best project manager that ever lived or becoming the CEO of Arcadis. If I get there, fantastic, however, if I don't, I still want to have left a positive legacy behind.

Andrew Belt: And just to finish off our conversation, I'll ask some quick-fire questions.

What interested you in pursuing a career in project management?

Josh Olney: I've always wanted to work on football stadiums in some fashion, whether that be designing or building. With project management I have the chance to oversee the whole project from start to finish. The skills I have gained and will continue to gain from project management are transferable to a lot of other careers. This means once I have become chartered, I may decide to look at something completely different. Who knows, I may one day become manager of my beloved Luton!

Andrew Belt: Staying with Luton Town, who's your favourite Luton player of all time?

Josh Olney: For me, it has to be Steve McNulty. Our former captain in the Conference years. He arguably shouldn't have been a footballer, at 6ft 1 and nearing 18 stone at one point, but he was incredibly smart and read the game better than most. He sums up everything Luton are about: taking chances on people, bringing through leaders and finding smart solutions to gain success. Also check out his goal against Southport in 2013. Screamer.

Andrew Belt: You live near to Bristol, so what's the best thing about living in the south west?

Josh Olney: Living in the countryside and being so close to the sea. I used to live in Northampton, which is basically slap bang in the centre of England. It would take hours and hours to get anywhere near the coast. Now I am 20 minutes away which is great for the dogs.

Andrew Belt: With Christmas shortly upon us, is there a go-to Christmas film you'll be watching this year?

Josh Olney: Got to be Jack Frost. The 1998 one with Michael Keaton. Probably not one you were expecting, but anything with sport suits me.

Andrew Belt: And same theme, what's your favourite Christmas song?

Josh Olney: Driving Home for Christmas by Chris Rea. Listened to it driving home from my last day at work last year. Not sure what is will be this year though as I won't be travelling anywhere.

Andrew Belt: Thanks for your time, Josh. If you would like to find out more about The Apprenticeship Guy, visit theapprenticeshipguy.com. To find out more about UCEM's apprenticeships, visit ucem.ac.uk and look for 'Develop talent for your business' if you're an employer or 'Becoming an apprentice' if you're a prospective apprentice. Thanks for listening!