

Greg D'Alba

I graduated from the University at Buffalo. The day after graduation I put a thousand dollars in my pocket from my newly acquired student loan that I earned. I jumped on a plan, I ended up in mid-town Manhattan, found a really expensive room, and figured I would get a job the next day. And the next day turned out to be six months, and it wasn't the job I really wanted, it was behind a bar. And that gave me some time to think and reflect what I really wanted to do with my life, which I realized wasn't going to be making blockbuster films. What allowed me to get there and to get to the point in my life that I would take a risk and that I would look for innovation in the form of career path was certainly my experience here at the University. I was lucky, I had what I believe is a good school with engaging professors that challenged me to look at the world differently, to think differently. You don't realize it when you're doing it, but you realize there's that one moment in that one classroom with that one professor where you say, "I get it, I get it, I gotta' do something more with this." Where you take such pride in what you're doing and what you're learning that you feel that you want to example that somewhere and do something better with it.

Now along the way, and where you grow, is how much better you get at your learning experience. It's not your performance; I mean your performance, that takes care of itself. It's how much better you get at learning, and understanding what learning is all about, and learning becomes being wide open to idea, the challenging, taking risks, not accepting "no" for an answer, instead of asking why, (ask) why not, and going into areas that you never thought you were capable. It's not a linear process, it's not what you're going to learn from point A to B to C, it's going to be the process of learning, and how intrigued you are along the way, in your ability to want and need, and desire to do more, and to do something different with your career, which may even mean at some point taking a risk. I think graduate school is good, but it's got to be a part of your process and it's got to be what you want from it. If you're going to graduate school because it's another degree on the piece of paper to get you a higher paying job out of school, you're already out of luck, because I can tell you right now the job force out there is getting more and more competitive, and what an employer wants to see is not your graduate degree or the school where you got that graduate degree from, they're going to want to see how you practically used that education while you were getting it.

It's really important that we broaden our learning experience by opening up our hearts, and opening up our minds, and understanding diversity, and understanding that diversity isn't about making friends with somebody that's different than you, - that's not what diversity is all about. Diversity is about challenge, diversity is about learning, diversity is about intersection of thought and idea from very different directions. Diversity becomes professional through cultural diversity. And I tell our new people coming in don't be intimidated by this building. We're in Columbus Circle, we're overlooking Central Park, we can see Jersey, we can see the East Side, the West Side, and half the world from where we are. And you come in and you say, "Oh my God, I'm working at CNN, I can see the world from here." And I tell them, don't be intimidated, this is just another bar on campus. And sometimes it is - I hate to say it. And I love when I see our employees going out to the pub across the street after work. That means so much because that means they're getting it, they kind of like each other, they're hanging out after work and they don't have to. Don't get me wrong, you don't have to like

everybody, don't feel like "Ok, I gotta' walk out of here, and I gotta' make friends with everybody that I work with the day I walk into my new job opportunity." No, they'll think you're weird if you just start walking up to everybody. But what I'm going to tell you is that it will become necessary that you respect each other, and I guarantee that if you respect each other, 99% of the time you're going to like each other.

I want people to be fearless when they come to work. I told a story earlier that I was at a professional event a couple of weeks ago with gay lesbian transgender employees in the media industry, and I was lucky enough to listen to a few of the folks, and I feel really proud about where we're heading as an organization. Someone said to me that it's good to work in a company that they're not afraid to come to every day, and it just freaked me out. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to be afraid, and it's really important to me that no employee is ever afraid to come to work or afraid to walk into the school yard, that this could actually exist, and it does. And we work really hard, and we're going to continue to work hard at creating a fearless community within our workforce, through better understanding of each other, better knowledge, better respect, which leads to collaboration and communication, and innovation, which is primarily one of the reasons why we're kicking everybody's butt out there. And you know what, being respectful and being good people is a business, that's the easiest thing you'll ever do. I guarantee it, if you find that company that believes in that, you're in the right spot, and you're with a winner.

I told a bunch of students earlier that when I look at a resume, I don't look at GPA, I don't look at the academia, the societies that you are involved in, although it's important, and it really matters to you because you're trying to learn more. What I really look at is public service and community involvement, on campus and off, because I want to know that you're not only socializing, but you're learning to manage, you're learning to lead, and you're learning to operate within a corporate environment and a community service environment. You know, what's really important here, and I read this in a magazine on the flight down, it was I think, "Fortune," it was talking about leadership, and it said most employees will never get the opportunity to serve on a corporate board, but every single person in society can serve on a community service board.

I like internships, along the way; I like a real process attachment to the product of learning what you want to do. It may not necessarily be the field you end up with, but I like a lot of activity, because it shows that you're really engaged. If you have the opportunity to get your Masters, and it's through your own process, get you to where you know more than your competition, that's a wonderful thing. I want to get you to where you know more, and for some people that's not going to be through a graduate program, because they have that opportunity. You may not have that opportunity to get that ideal internship. You may be a finance major, and you're not getting that Morgan Stanley internship, so you have no choice, in the competitive world you've got to get your Masters at that point. And every industry is different, communications industry, because we like a lot of practical community experience, because there's a real process of learning that's going on through innovation right now for us, that's necessary in how we look at people. But I've got to tell you, if you're a finance major, and you're trying to compete out there, I don't think you'd walk in the door unless you've got a Masters from some Ivy League program out there these days.

We've had more people on-air move to sales or marketing and promotion. Maybe it's a confidence thing, because you do have to have a certain gumption about you to be able to be a revenue producer. But I don't know if it was that, I think it's more that the people that have moved from behind the camera, or in front of the camera, to behind the camera, to behind the scenes in the media management part of the business, are usually the people that want to run the business, and eventually want to be the ones hiring the people behind the cameras, because they have a certain leadership skill about them that makes them want to manage a lot of people. In the media industry we're so underserved at your level as far as education that we're looking for people that have a real practical college experience and have really digested the business of media management.

There's big difference between being on-air and talent and being a journalist. And we have people that are on-air and talent, and there are real journalists. You look at a guy like Anderson Cooper, I can tell you one thing, that's as pure a journalist as you'll ever find, he's for real. But a guy like Anderson is not going to want to run a company. There's the difference. What I'm saying is, mostly people that want to manage the media business will transfer over. If you have that very specific skill set to be a journalist and/or a news person behind camera, that usually will happen with confidence. You could be in sales and marketing, and if you have that confidence about you, yeah, you would have that opportunity.