

# Bonus Episode | Best Advice for University Seniors Transcript

[00:00:00] Andy Murray: Hi, I'm Andy Murray. Welcome to It's a Customer's World podcast. Now more than ever, retailers and brands are accelerating their quest to be more customer-centric. But to be truly customer centric. It requires both a shift in mindset and ways of working, not just in marketing, but in all parts of the organization.

[00:00:27] In this podcast series, I'll be talking with practitioners, thought leaders, and scholars to hear their thoughts on what it takes to be a leader in today's customer centric world.

[00:00:43] Hello, everyone. Welcome to It's a Customer's World podcast. Since the beginning of producing this podcast, I routinely asked each guest, what advice would you give to students who are going to be graduating into the workforce? And in every case, this question brought out a level of passion that showed they cared deeply about helping others become successful in starting their own career journey.

[00:01:05] So for this episode, we've created a special mix tape if you will, of the best advice from 10 guests that speaks to everything from mindsets to practical methods and early stages of a career journey.

[00:01:25] First out of the gate is Kevin Roberts. Kevin is a bestselling author who launched the fresh idea of love, marks the future beyond brands. He's the former CEO Sachi and someone I learned loads from as my boss for some time, Kevin gets right to the heart of the matter on advice as you would expect him to do by focusing on purpose.

[00:01:43] Kevin Roberts: I wrote a book called 64 Shots, which was 64 ideas about leadership and in one of the early chapters, I talked about the need to write a personal purpose on a page to actually spell out your inspirational dream, to really spell out who you are, your character attributes, what you believe. And not the normal nonsense, right?

[00:02:08] Vision goals objectives, all this garbage. No, this is real. What's your dream? Who are you? What is your spirit? What's your very DNA. What gets you out of bed in the morning? What turns you on? What makes you happy? What is your focus, at your tender age for the next five years? What little footprints do you wanna leave in the sand?

[00:02:36] So I, I recommend you get a hold of that book on Kindle or wherever and read about personal purpose. Because if you don't know where you are going, all roads will take you there. I think the second thing for me is, I don't know what advice you've been given,

but it's a it's an important decision, your next decision to go somewhere and make an impact.

[00:03:00] But it's not a vital decision. The next 10 years for you should be experimental. They should be a joy of discovery, a voyage of curiosity, a voyage of finding out stuff. A voyage

[00:03:20] that is full of new and full of exploration and just full of fun. The decisions you make now make the big decisions with your heart. Taylor, not with your head. All this SWAT strengths, weaknesses, threats opportunities. That's yesterday's thinking you just gotta make a big decision with your heart, follow your passion.

[00:03:50] And then when you screwed up in six months, just leave and start over. Okay. Just toss it, man. It's experience. Just, and then go to the next one, travel both. Now's a great time after this pandemic to imagine the unimaginable right. To change everything, because if we go backwards, what a tragedy. So you're in a great moment.

[00:04:18] Saatchi & Saatchi, Andy will tell you, we believe nothing is impossible. Make the big decisions with your heart. Have a personal purpose, look to make impact and have no fear. Have no fear.

[00:04:36] Andy Murray: Next up is Sherilyn Shackle. She is CEO of the marketing academy, an organization she founded to mentor and develop marketers, especially those aspiring to the C-suite.

[00:04:47] Here's what she had to say about the most important criteria for picking a place to work.

[00:04:51] Sherilyn Shackell: In terms of your future career, look at the organizations by understanding their culture. That's the thing that you should look at more than anything, it doesn't matter if their brand isn't in the top 20 brands and you can go call those lists from everywhere to see where the brands are and you don't need a company that's already got that kind of profile in order to thrive. What you do need to do is you need to understand the cultures of the businesses. You need to understand their value set. So what the values are, the behaviors, the way things are done within the organization, they're cultural drivers and what's important to them. And that's the lens through which you need to decide which organization you're gonna target.

[00:05:30] You can even for this first step in your career, You don't even really need to think about the sector, is it really something that's good? Is it gonna be a sector that excites you? The role and the environment and the people that you work with will provide the excitement, but if the culture and the values are wrong, it doesn't matter how exciting the industry or how exciting the brand.

[00:05:48] I could name some brands that are highly aspirational for grads to join. And 9-10 grads would absolutely hate the culture. And these are successful big global businesses where the culture's just misaligned to the things that the people in their early mid twenties are looking for. So don't get seduced by the size of the brand, get seduced by the culture and the values and seek evidence that they actually operate in that way and are true to their values.

[00:06:21] And then so long as the job sounds interesting, and you're gonna get some growth. Then, what have we got to lose? And two or three years experience is gonna set you up for the next job, which in two or three years in your next job, two or three years. So I would look at it through that lens.

[00:06:35] Andy Murray: Next we'll hear from renowned marketer thought leader and author.

[00:06:38] Jim Stengel. Jim is the president of the Jim Stengel company, host of the CMO podcast and bestselling author of grow. He also works as an adjunct professor, a speaker in an advisor. I interviewed Jim back in the middle of the pandemic when we were at the height of uncertainty. His advice about confidence rings as true today, as it did back then.

[00:07:00] Jim Stengal: You're never gonna forget these time, right? I'm not sure I remember the year I graduated know what was going on. I remember a little bit, but this is an indelible year in all of our lives. And I would just realize that you're living in a special time and for all the ups and downs of that and to approach that with confidence.

[00:07:22] And I use that word very carefully. I think when people start to lose their confidence, it's bad and times in my career where I felt like I was losing my confidence, it was not good. And this is not easy to do sometimes when you've had a bunch of job interviews or some rejections or whatever it might be, but deliberately keep yourself confidence, whatever that takes, you got to where you are, you're graduating for many good reasons and you are to be proud of that. And all of you bring something to a company, to the world, to society. So just keep your head up, keep confident, this is a difficult time to be entering the workforce, but it's also unique. And it's interesting. So just keep your swagger, keep your confidence and things will work out for all of you. I really hope. And I think they will.

[00:08:14] Andy Murray: One question I get asked occasionally by students is the question of when is it a good time to become an entrepreneur and is coming straight out of college into entrepreneurship? A good idea or not? I can think of no one better to answer that question than Sarah Goforth.

[00:08:29] Sarah is the executive director of the office of entrepreneurship and innovation at the university of Arkansas, Sam M Walton college of business.

[00:08:37] Sarah Goforth: I get that question a lot and there, there is data around it. There have been studies that have been done. I've read a lot of these studies. I follow the literature in this space and there's some evidence that if you start a company later in life. So at the time of life that I'm at 45 mid-career you have a higher chance of success. And I think that some of the reasons for that are that you, that point have work experience behind you. You may have a deeper access to industry needs because you've worked in the private sector.

[00:09:07] Maybe you are more structured in your time and you, I, who knows there are reasons. But my answer to the question is always, there's never just like Phil said, there's never a good time to start a business. It's always full of risk. It's always fraught with challenges but there's also never a bad time.

[00:09:21] And there are ways to be engaged in the entrepreneurial life without taking a huge leap and leaving your full-time job or turning your back on the other opportunities available to you. So if you have a curiosity about it, my advice is jump in now.

[00:09:36] Andy Murray: So we've been listening to great advice on how to orient yourself to the market opportunities and career choices.

[00:09:43] But now I wanna dial into some advice on how to best approach the work. Once you've made a decision. Up first is Paco Underhill. Paco is the founder and strategic advisor for invi cell and author of why we buy the science of shopping. I chose PCA's advice for this question first, because he really does approach everything with a powerful eye of observation as if it were his first time seeing something it's probably no surprise.

[00:10:10] His advice would reflect that passion for powerful observation.

[00:10:15] Paco Underhill: This is what I reccomend is that we have gotten all too comfortable learning by staring into our screens and thinking, sitting down. And that one of the keys to our education is learning how to think standing up. I am reminded of my interactions with the Israeli defense forces who say that battles are won, when generals get to the front lines. And that experience of being able to get out there and see, look, and process is in part about learning empathy, but it's also about having a tactile, real understanding what is. Going on at that point of intersection and rubber sole shoes and spending a little time on the front lines, I think is very valuable.



[00:11:09] Andy Murray: Next we'll hear from Simon Miles. Simon is the vice president of global omnichannel commercial strategy for the Coca-Cola company. Simon has held a number of roles across Coke, and that gives him a broad view of how the total system works, which is why he cautions against staying too narrow in the early assignments.

[00:11:27] Simon Miles: I also think and I've given this advice to a few people that I mentor is I think it's really important in the early stages of your career to think about building a very solid broad base to your skill set. So if you are, if you're fortunate like James and I, you work for a company, like CocaCola, it offers you a wealth of different types of roles.

[00:11:45] And my advice is don't think narrow. So think about how do you build out the strength of your base? So whether that is getting exposure into finance or human resources or supply chain or marketing or sales, all of those elements are gonna pay you back in future years, because it will build your broader understanding of how organizations work and how they get things done.

[00:12:04] Because the challenge in today's world is it moves so quickly. The people have succeeded. The people that can get stuff done and are able to navigate around it. And if they've walked in your other, the other people's shoes so much the better.

[00:12:15] Andy Murray: I couldn't be fair and unbiased without also hearing from a good friend, Jeff Swearingen. Jeff is the senior vice president of PepsiCo's north American demand accelerator. Jeff makes a strong case. We're focusing on building your creative muscle early in your career. Given creativity will be the unlock for technology enabled roles in the future.

[00:12:34] Jeff Swearingen: I think that creativity is gonna be incredibly important and creativity often when we use the word creativity again, it's a bit of an empty vessel word you have to fill with meaning because it may take people to art or creative art or things like that.

[00:12:47] And it certainly is those things, but it's just agile problem solving. And that ability that agile problem solving is at a huge premium. And I think that will continue. And I think some of the functional capabilities and technical capabilities because of machine learning and because of AI, a lot of those things will become a little more commoditized over time and you'll have access to tools and capabilities that are at your fingertips that are going to be very powerful and very value added. But the real premium on you as a leader is your creativity in how you leverage those resources to solve big problems or to gain advantage in the market.

[00:13:33] Yeah, completely agree.

[00:13:35] Andy Murray: Next, we'll hear the advice from Dr. Nick. Fine. Nick is a user experience researcher and designer with over 20 years experience in digital. He holds a PhD in human computer interactions and a BS in psychology. Nick's advice dovetails nicely with Jeff's focus on creativity as he emphasizes building expertise in understanding the human condition and why we do what we do.

[00:13:59] Nick Fine: Yeah. I would definitely encourage. Anyone either with a psychology undergraduate degree or any students wanting to get into this area, get a psychology degree. Psychology has powered everything that I've done from day one and it continues to guide everything I do today without my psychology, I would be nothing or I would be a shadow of what I am psychology is my support.

[00:14:23] It's my base. The reason why psychology is so powerful is we're talking about human behavior. So it's not a visual design thing. It's not an it thing. It's about people and their needs and that's human behavior. And psychology is the scientific study of human behavior. So if you can get in, or if you are, want to go back to school or back to technical college or whatever, get some kind of qualification in psychology. It's absolutely going to be a major factor in product and the digital world moving forwards. We are the scientists of digital and digital needs more science. So therefore science needs more

psychologists or user centric practitioners. That's the best advice I can give you.

[00:15:04] Andy Murray: Next comes advice from Chad Fox. Chad is the CMO of dollar general and has held a variety of positions across very different industry sectors. He shares some great advice about breadth, but also some healthy mindset tips for staying on your A game.

[00:15:19] Chad Fox: But I, I would say that curiosity is something that I think, People need to either naturally be that way or they need to try to adopt that way of thinking.

[00:15:29] Because being a student, of marketing being the student of the customer, being a student of retail is you, that will be a lifelong or a career long practice. And so I think curiosity is key. I would say, , that curiosity and knowing what's going on out there have a point of view.

[00:15:47] I think having a point of view is very important in making recommendations. And that's so often people come with problems and they point out what they don't like, but they don't have a point of view. And I know you're big on that one from our past life together. I'd say accountability.

[00:16:03] Accountability is one. And these are things that I think people need to start learning now but keep score and hold yourself accountable. I tell my team all the time "we are they. Stop talking about they, we are they and and so be accountable." And and then I said this earlier, don't be a dinosaur, stay fresh, stay on top of what's going on out there and collect new experiences and new learnings.

[00:16:27] The final thing I would say on that one you and I both know Steve. Steve said to me, several, probably a decade. We had a lot of new people starting with the company, young MBAs coming straight outta grad school. And they all wanted to know, all right what do I do? What's the order of things that I do.

[00:16:44] I need this job, then this job, should I go over to merchandising? Should I go over to operations? What are these different and his point was always learn how to do something first. Learn how to do something. And in this case learn how to be a marketer. And I think I think there's a lot of there's a lot of truth in that.

[00:17:00] And, I made the decision again, coming outta grad school to go work on the agency side. I vividly remember one of my professors. You're dragging down the starting salary of the entire class because I took a job as an account executive and, but I saw it as postgraduate education.

[00:17:16] I wanted to go get, my PhD, so to speak in marketing in branding. And and I think that is, that's really important. And I did at the director level, I made the move over to merchandising. And but I felt, like I was taking a perspective as a marketer into that role.

[00:17:37] And it was time for me to go, I'd learned how to do something. It was time for me to go. What I didn't realize is, or maybe I didn't realize it enough is how much I did love marketing. And I've got a lot of, I've got a boss, that's a merchant, I've got a lot of merchants around me. But what I learned from my one year in merchandising and how much I love marketing, but I will tell you, it goes back to perspective Andy I came back into marketing as an even better marketer. Yeah. Because of that experience in merchandising it and the empathy that I've developed for what the merchants do and what the vendors do. I saw a different side of the vendors or the manufacturer partners in that role. And it was another, experience that made me a better marketer.

[00:18:18] I wanna believe there's something in there that would help, students.

[00:18:22] Andy Murray: Last, but not least is the advice shared by Rashad Tobaccowala. Rashad was the chief growth officer at Publicis group and well known as a marketing innovator, author, and he's been recognized by Time and Business Week as a top thought leader in

marketing. Rashad's view that math and meaning must come together, painted a picture for me of what threads through all of the interviews that we've heard so far.

[00:18:47] Rishad Tobaccowala: I would basically tell them four things. The first thing I would basically say is we are entering a world where marketing is in Renaissance. So don't believe that marketing is not in Renaissance because we have people with God like power. Marketing's gonna be more important than ever before. So anything to do with people, customers, consumers, and marketing is a great industry.

[00:19:05] So that's number one. Number two is please recognize that in order to be successful, you are going to have to marry math and meaning, right? You're gonna have to be good at math. I'm not saying you yourself will be good at mathematics, but you gotta pay attention to data and reality, not just invent anything out of thing, but at the same time to extract meaning and purpose and all of those case things, the third

[00:19:29] is make sure you recognize that when you come out of school, regardless of how successful you are likely to work for 50 years. And that's because unless something goes really wrong, you're gonna have a healthy life, at least 75, and hopefully you'll live to 90 or

95. And as a result, When you take the first job, take the least sucky job you can get.

[00:19:52] And one that basically you think you might actually be good at, and don't necessarily price yourself out of your dreams. Like having a job that pays a lot and then increases your lifestyle and you're miserable for the rest of your life. So don't price yourself out of your dreams and the last one, which they may not like to learn, especially since it's quite bugging to study all the time is make sure that when you come out of school, you continue to be a student because the world keeps changing.

[00:20:17] So try to set aside a half an hour, a day to keep learning.

[00:20:28] Andy Murray: I hope you've enjoyed this episode as much as I did. If you'd like to hear more from any of the guests highlighted, be sure to check out It's a Customer's World podcast on Apple or Spotify, or wherever you listen to your podcast, or you can click on the links and the comments or show notes until next time, thanks for listening.