

Dream Work Experience

Unconventional strategies to get the work experience or internship of your dreams and build a career.



By Bill Riddell

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For everyone unsure of where to go and puzzled by thought of
how to get there.

“The difference between school and life? In school, you're taught
a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that
teaches you a lesson.”- Tom Bodett

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Introduction – My Story, Your Book

So how do you get the work experience of your dreams?

And why should you bother reading what I have to say?

Let me start by saying there is no magic pill that will instantly deliver you the work experience you want. It will take some hard work, research, a few phone calls and emails and plenty of patience.

However, do not be put off by the prospect of a little extra effort. The rewards are far greater than you can imagine. From this little seed of hard work now a great career and fulfilled life will grow from it.

I know this system works. I have used it to get two exceptional work experiences, once in my last year of high school and again when at college. From there I turned those experiences into a great first job and a burgeoning career.

Furthermore I've spoken to and read about hundreds of people who have used similar unconventional strategies to launch their careers to unexpected success.

It is entirely possible to make your dreams come true, as I have proved not once, but twice.

At the time of my work experience opportunities in high school and later education I believed Public Relations (PR) was the perfect job for me. I loved writing and together with my passion for car racing I wanted nothing more than to work for a car racing team as their Public Relations Officer or in a similar position. Combining the two things I enjoyed most in the world.

I targeted PR people working for racing teams in V8 Supercars (an Australian racing series similar to NASCAR). It is the third most popular sport in the country and each team is really a multi-million dollar company.

At first I wasn't confident and bold enough to apply to the top teams. My poorer first applications went to the smaller and less successful teams. My applications slowly improving with each rejection – working my way up to the more successful and better funded teams.

My learning curve wasn't fast enough and I was running out of teams. By the time I had finetuned the process there was really only one team remaining that I had not contacted. The Holden Racing Team. Then reigning series champions, they had been the most successful team in the last decade.

Along with thousands of fans around Australia, I would have given anything to get the opportunity to work with them.

I put in weeks of research in order to get the opportunity of a lifetime. Learning everything I could about the team, its team members and particularly the man who I applied directly to, Paul 'Wally' Weissel.

Wally was the teams PR guru and had been with the outfit for years. As arguably the most respected Public Relations person in series it would be a tremendous chance to learn from the best.

Optimism while sending my previous applications had slowly faded and I strongly doubted my chance of snaring the opportunity. After finishing the research another week was spent writing the email I would send to Paul. It is a long time to write an email, but by getting it perfect, look what I achieved.

I finally sent off the email and had a resounding reply of 'yes' within a few hours. Suddenly the weeks spent worrying about applications were all worth it.

Just a few months later I was running around pitlane at the race, meeting drivers, journalists, team owners and more while learning more about the industry in a handful of days than I had by spending years in the classroom and as a fan on the sidelines.

A year later I was in college studying Public Relations. It was compulsory to complete some extra work experience as part of the course in addition to the compulsory work for several charities.

While my class mates mostly settled for easy targets (family friends, working with the teachers or even missing out all together because it seemed to hard) I decided shoot for the stars. After my first opportunity I wanted my next one to be bigger.

After learning the ropes I earned my next work experience much more easily. I certainly didn't need to apply to 20 different places - even if it did take over a year to come true.

I had already worked for one of the best teams and PR gurus in the country - now I wanted to up the ante and work for one of the best in the world.

My favourite international racing series was the MotoGP World Championship and I thought their once a year visit to Australia to race would be the perfect opportunity. I started researching the different teams and their PR people in earnest.

One of those people stood out - her name was Ali Forth. Unlike Wally, who was at the end of his career (he retired shortly after my opportunity), Ali was still very young and had already accomplished an awful lot in a short career.

Some research revealed she too had previously received a tremendous work experience while studying, that she had worked hard to get. I knew she would understand how important work experience is and I would be in with a strong chance.

I researched some more about her and the company she worked for, the Yamaha factory team and crafted my email to suit, once again spending several days refining the email before hitting 'send'.

A reply came a few days later. Ali and the team wanted to give me a chance – but sadly there was a road block. It was essential to have accreditation to work at their races and unfortunately the team did not have any to spare.

It was a hollow victory. I searched in vain to get accreditation from other sources without luck and resigned to the fact that it wasn't going to happen.

Despite the disappointment I stayed in touch with Ali.

Early the following year I asked Ali again if it would be possible to work with her when the series came to Australia to race.

The team had just undergone a major boost, with extra sponsorship and most notably reigning world champion rider Valentino Rossi joining them.

Rossi (now an eight time world champion) would mean a lot more interest in the team from fans and the media (TV, newspapers, magazines, etc) which would translate into a lot more work for Ali.

It worked in my favour. As Valentino brought the team unprecedented success on the track with each race so too did Ali's workload.

Just weeks before the series came to race in Australia I received a call from her. Valentino had a strong chance of winning the world championship in Australia and she would need help dealing with the extra attention.

It was my big chance and I took it.

I was watching the race in air conditioned comfort of the circuits media centre, overlooking the circuit not far from the finish line as Rossi won the race and championship.

Being involved when a team wins a world championship was an amazing experience. One that very few people experience and I was incredibly lucky to be a part of it.

After Valentino won the title I watched from the media centre (a large room with views over the finish line where I did a lot of work) as he mounted the podium. I looked out at a sea of fans, chanting, cheering and waving flags.

Minutes later I was rushing to pick up a box filled with champagne bottles and carrying them back to the teams garage, where all involved celebrated the occasion. I handed bottle after bottle to the world champion as he sprayed, celebrated and drank with his team and supporters. A magical occasion and I was somehow a part of it all.

Driving home from the track late that evening still soaked in champagne after much celebration, thanks and goodbyes I reflected on all that I had experienced.

I had ran around after a world famous athlete worshipped by many, met movie stars, other famous sports stars, multi-millionaire business men, worked with media representatives from all around the world and been a part of a team of people that worked together to win a world championship.

Somehow in amongst it all I had learnt so much that several years latter still boggles my mind.

There isn't always those incredible moments in other forms of business. It doesn't always sound that glamour and your colleagues may or may not spray a box full of champagne on each once a year, but it can happen each has their own unique attractions.

After I completed my great work experiences I had quite a few friends coming up to me and telling me how 'lucky I was' and wanting me to 'get them' the work experience of their dreams as well.

I tried to explain to them that I wasn't really lucky. It took a lot of effort to become lucky and gain that wonderful opportunity.

I worked hard, refined my process and as a result was greatly rewarded. Some didn't understand that I couldn't just wave a magic wand or make a quick phone call to the company they wanted to work for.

I gave some of them tips and advice - some critiques here and there, but most lost interest.

They were impatient and unwilling to invest the little time needed to take the wonderful opportunities that are possible.

A few friends said I should write a book about how to do it but I honestly thought none of them would bother to read it. Most didn't really want to listen to what seemed like a pretty complicated system.

While the methods in this book are going to take more than 15 minutes they are really quite simple; and the effort required will seem absolutely miniscule compared with the potential success it may lead to.

Several years later, my two incredible work experience opportunities together with my undeniable passion, netted me a job as a motorsport journalist. Despite the fact I didn't really have any experience in the job I was applying for I was awarded the position over a lot of other applicants, some better qualified.

During the interview my potential boss and one of his employees were enthralled by stories of my work experience and how I got them. I'm pretty sure they were even a bit envious.

My unique work experience undoubtedly won me that job and by achieving your dream work experience it will do the same for you.

I soon found myself working in a wonderful job getting paid to do the two things I love most in the world (writing and being involved in car racing). I was working as a journalist for a top car racing magazine and getting paid to go watch racing. I got the chance to interview racing stars from around Australia and even the world, including Formula 1 and NASCAR drivers.

That little bit of hard work getting the work experience had paid off big time and I'm sure it will do the same for you!

One day I was at my desk working. I was alone in the office after a very busy week when the phone rang.

It was a school teacher. He called trying to get his student work experience doing the exact job I had. I was polite to the teacher, took down the schools number as well as the students email address and thanked him for calling.

After I hung up the phone I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

WHY would this kid get his teacher to call?

If the student wanted to be a journalist he would need to be able to write well. So he should have been able to send my boss a great email asking for some work experience and explaining why he would be suitable.

He would also need to be good at talking to people, even total strangers. So he should have also been able to call by himself.

I passed the message along to my boss first thing next morning. He definitely did laugh. Then I saw him he throw the message and phone number straight in the bin after I told him that the students' teacher had called on his behalf.

I instantly felt bad for the student. A great opportunity had passed him by because he had made a fundamental mistake. Yet it was one that could be so easily corrected.

Right then I promised myself that one day I would do something to help that student and many more around the world to achieve their dreams. To enjoy the same opportunities that I did. This book is the eventual result.

After some time at my old job I found myself working freelance (working for myself and selling what I write to different places), I thought it about time I sat down to write this book.

This is the book I wish I had a few years ago. Back then I spent months reading different books, listening to teachers and advisors who more often than not had the same dull advice that did not really work.

I sent hundreds of emails to different people, made phone calls and more trying to find the answer.

Further weeks and months were spent perfecting my system. Writing endless drafts of my applications before sending them off and enduring the long and agonising wait to hear back about my fate.

If I had this book back then I would have skipped the hurt and embarrassment of so many rejections. Spared the hard work and pain and skipped almost straight to the incredible opportunities that I received for all of that effort.

It most definitely was worth it, but why should you have to learn the same lessons that I did the hard way. So here instead are those lessons presented to you.

Though I cannot hold your hand and help you the whole way I truly hope by following these methods you go on to achieve your dreams as I have done.

Job seeking and gaining work experience is not an exact science so sadly I cannot present a specific formula for you to follow, I wish I could. I have spent years trying to find one.

Instead it is more of an art form. It is subjective; each person who may hire you has their own style, their own criteria and needs. They are each looking for something different and you must tailor each application as best as possible to meet those needs.

I can only present you with the best guidelines and advice. The rest is up to you. Get reading, perfect your art and I'm sure the work experience of your dreams will follow.

One note, I use the term work experience throughout this book in place of several other terms used around the world. You may recognise it as an internship, unpaid/volunteer work and much more.

To me it is the most appropriate label, all are essentially the same thing. The broad definition I give is 'any introductory work you may do for an organisation to develop your skills, assess if the job or business is suitable for you (and for a business to assess you) for limited or non-financial reward over a period of time between one day and one year.

I recommend reading through this book once – straight through to get a full understanding of how everything works together then working your way through chapter to chapter – working out what job you want, which company to apply to, etc.

Remember one thing, when applying for a job you do not have to be the most qualified applicant in the world, you just have to make a better application than the rest of the people applying for the opportunity.

Please send me an email letting me know how you went, how this book helped and how it can be improved.

I look forward to hearing about your successes very soon.

All the best,

Bill Riddell

31st of March, 2009.

Want more?

If you want to get started making your dream come true head to <http://billriddell.com/dream-work-experience/>