**Adaptability & Flexibility**

# A LITTLE ABOUT ME





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# ADAPTABILITY

- "Adaptability is a soft skill that means being able to rapidly learn new skills and behaviours in response to changing circumstances" (EY)

**Why is it important?**

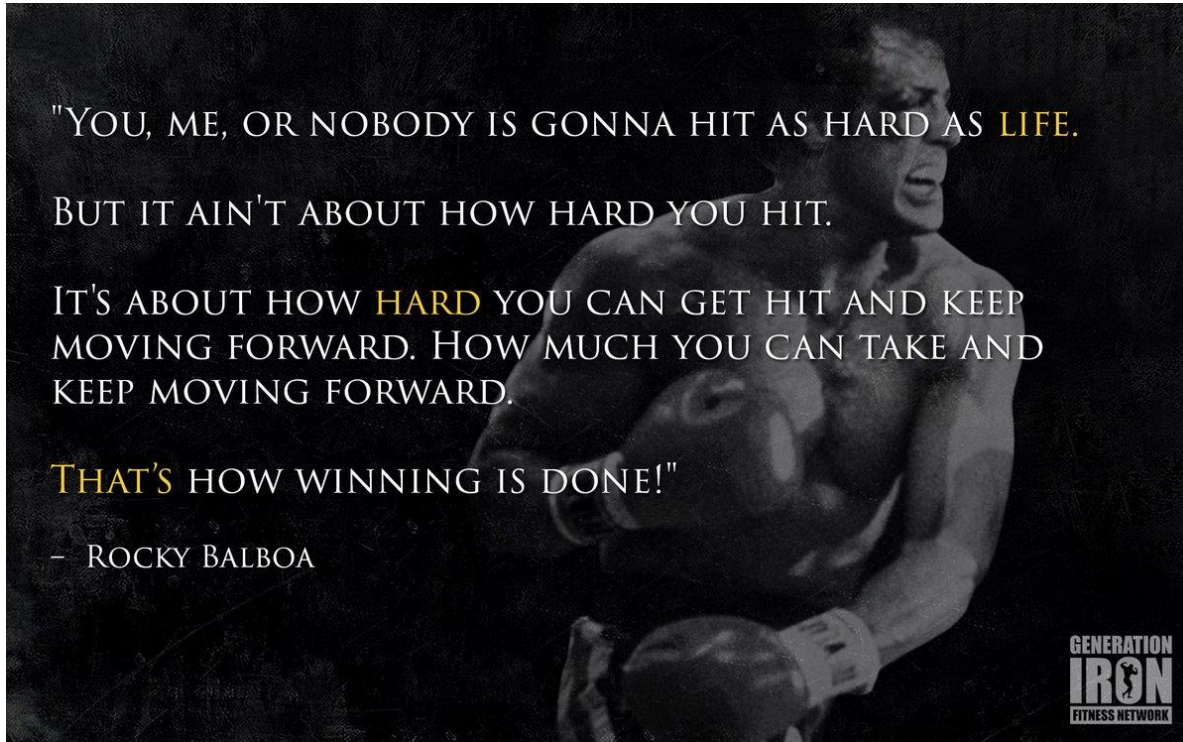- The world is changing. You're unlikely to have all the skills you need in the future.

# RESILIENCE

- "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness" (Google)

**Why is it important?**



"YOU, ME, OR NOBODY IS GONNA HIT AS HARD AS LIFE.

BUT IT AIN'T ABOUT HOW HARD YOU HIT.

IT'S ABOUT HOW HARD YOU CAN GET HIT AND KEEP MOVING FORWARD. HOW MUCH YOU CAN TAKE AND KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

THAT'S HOW WINNING IS DONE!"

– ROCKY BALBOA

GENERATION IRON FITNESS NETWORK

# FLEXIBILITY

- "Flexibility is the capacity to adjust to short-term change quickly and calmly, so that you can deal with unexpected problems or tasks effectively" (Mindtools)
  - Change may come from stakeholders and/or demands of each situation

**Why is it important?**

- The most interesting and exciting things happen when something changes.
- It will help your career to be seen as someone who can help in a challenging situation.

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# CASE STUDY

- Early Career Professional in a large consultancy firm
- Assistant Project Manager
- Sellafield – design and build
- The project is really challenging at the moment
- Problem: if you don't improve performance, fee may be reduced or contract cancelled
- Improvements in 4 areas
  - Stakeholder engagement
  - Financial monitoring
  - Programme
  - Collaboration
- What skills can you bring to this situation?
- What will you do?

# IN THE WORKPLACE

In the world of work, adaptability and flexibility can take many forms:

- Adapting to changes with how work is done, e.g. remote working, faster pace

- Flexing to cover a range of activities/ duties, or to step in for others

- Adapting to changing conditions, e.g. changes in budgets, the scope of a project changing, new processes or systems being introduced

- Adapting communication or working style depending on your audience

- Being open to change, or even suggesting and implementing changes to improve how your organisation runs

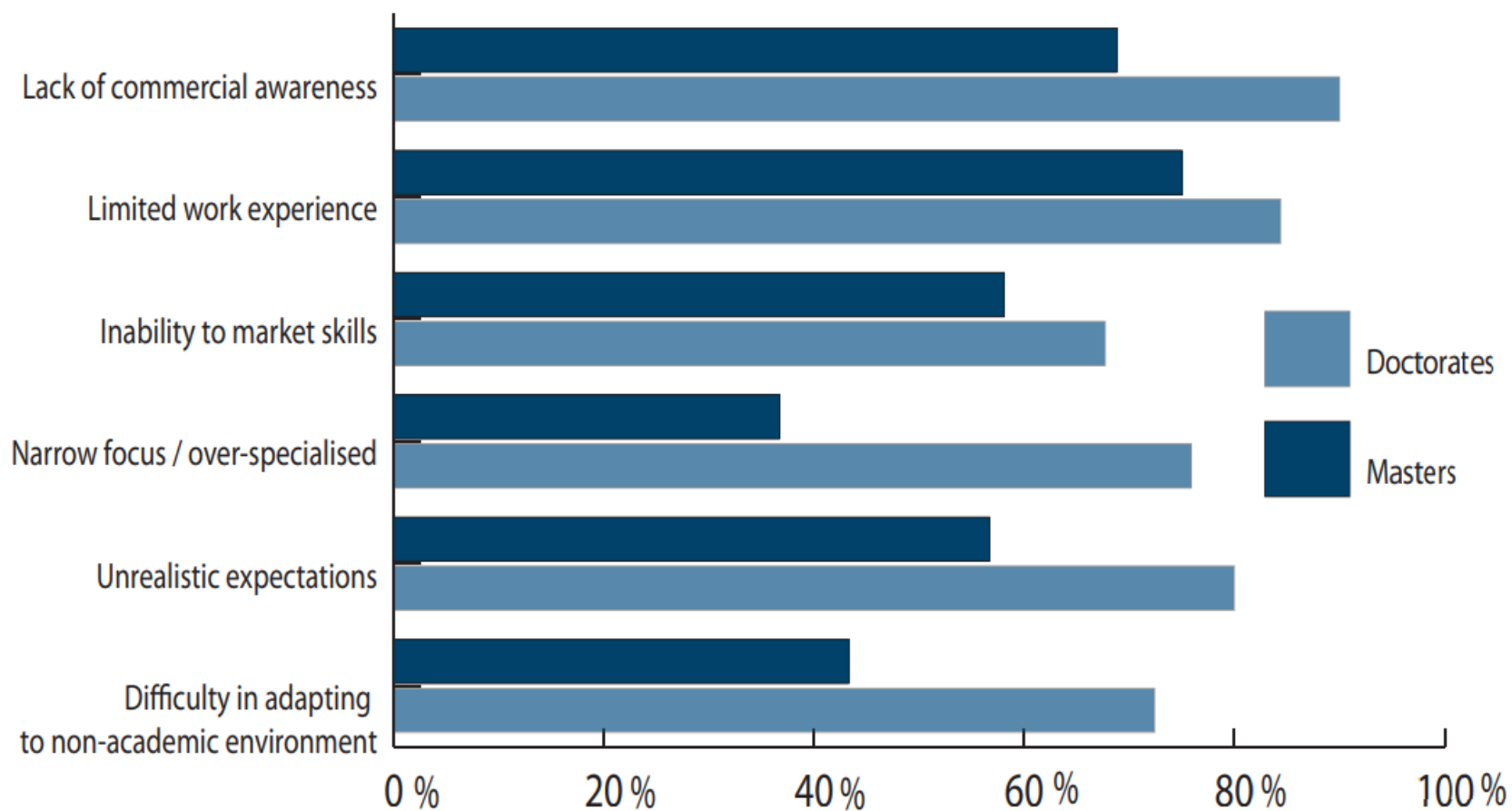UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM | CN CAREERS NETWORK

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Issues for employers when seeking to recruit Masters and Doctorates

| Issue | Doctorates | Masters |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of commercial awareness | | |
| Limited work experience | | |
| Inability to market skills | | |
| Narrow focus / over-specialised | | |
| Unrealistic expectations | | |
| Difficulty in adapting to non-academic environment | | |

*Talent Fishing: What Businesses Want from Postgraduates*

– CIHE, 2010

*"Most participants who moved away from academia mentioned that **they initially found the workplace environment quite difficult to adapt to**, particularly working as **part of a team** after coming from the "solitary experience" of the PhD. They also mentioned the strangeness of **having someone to answer to**, rather than having relative control over their own project."*

- Boyd, R., & McAlinden, S. (2016). 'PhD Study to Employment: Experiences of Transition'

# EXAMPLES: CIVIL SERVICE

*"Take a **positive, open approach to the possibility of change** and encourage others to do the same. Help others to understand changes and the reasons they are being put in place. Identify and **act on the effects that changes are having on your role and that of the team.**"*

## What we need from you

You don't need experience to join us! We're looking for people who can bring a fresh approach to businesses by realising the potential of data, AI, and next-generation technology.

- Educated to degree level with at least A level mathematics or statistics and minimum of 120 new (300 old) UCAS points
- Curious, analytical and great at solving problems – we don't need any previous coding skills, just excitement to learn!
- Desire to work with data and how it can help an organisation make better decisions
- Flexible and adaptable communicator who can work collaboratively
- Committed to producing high quality solutions
- Dedicated to continuous personal and professional development
- Flexible on location as our consultants often work across the UK

We are looking for future leaders and our ideal candidates are bright, inquisitive graduates who are passionate about, not only the ideals of the University, but also about the city and the wider region. You should be able to demonstrate the following qualifications, attributes and skills:

- At least a 2.1 in a first degree from the University of Birmingham in any subject in the past three years (between 1st January 2019 – 1st August 2022), or a University of Birmingham postgraduate qualification completed in the same period, having previously achieved at least a 2.1 in a first degree;
- An interest in, and understanding of, Higher Education issues;
- A high degree of initiative, resourcefulness, flexibility and a self-motivating approach;
- The ability to form effective working relationships with a diverse range of colleagues
- Ability to think analytically, to apply skills and knowledge in new contexts, and to problem solve by thinking beyond traditional solutions;
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively through oral and presentational skills as well as excellent writing skills;
- Resilience and adaptability to work effectively in new environments.

And in academia too!

*'Your teaching performance must be creative and adaptable, as evidenced by your experience.'*

# IN A COVER LETTER/ APPLICATION

*'I have a strong ability to adapt to change at work, evidenced by the fact that I submitted my PhD thesis on time despite losing 3 months of laboratory time due to COVID-19. To achieve this, I devised a methodical system of prioritisation and maintained effective communication with my supervisor to adjust the scope and focus of our work whilst still meeting my original project goals. Therefore, I believe I will be able to perform effectively in the fast-paced environment of consultancy, adapting my working style according to clients' needs and project constraints.'*

# IN A COVER LETTER/ APPLICATION

*"During my Masters, I was diagnosed with epilepsy. Despite my absence from several weeks of lectures and tutorials, I coordinated with lecturers, tutors, and peers to ensure that I did not fall behind. Managing various medical appointments, meetings and study groups has also helped develop my time management skills. This experience has revealed my strength and resilience when facing a significant challenge, and demonstrates my ability to adapt to any situation."*

# IN INTERVIEWS

- *For the past couple of years you have been doing your PhD. How will you adapt to being (back) in an industry environment?*

- *Tell me about a time when you adapted your communication style to suit different audiences*

- *How do you adjust to changes you have no control over?*

- *You have been working on a client's project for several months when your manager informs you that the project's requirements changed suddenly. What would you do?*

- ***Tell me about a time when you adapted to a change at work***

- ***Describe a time you were assigned new tasks. How did you adapt?***

# EXERCISE

- *Tell me about a time when you adapted to a change at work*

*OR*

- *Describe a time you were assigned new tasks. How did you adapt?*

- Give an example you could use for either of these interview questions

- Structure for your story: conflict/challenge, action, result (CAR)

# Find out more:

**URL:** http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/pg
**Email:** careersenquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk