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# How To Get Hired!

COMMERCIAL AWARENESS AND WHY IT MATTERS  
IN THE WORLD OF WORK

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# Objectives

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We will explore:

- What is commercial awareness and why is it important?
- How commercial awareness will help structure your career plan
- How to improve your commercial awareness and increase your employability
- How you can demonstrate commercial awareness
- Practical tips for interviews and assessment centres

# Be interactive!

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- Use the chat option to comment and share your thoughts
- Take part in the polls
- Plenty of time at the end to ask questions – we'd love to hear you and see you so please turn on your microphone/camera

# Who are Katie Bard?

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- Recruitment consultancy established for over 40 years
- Work across all sectors and size of businesses from start-ups to large multi-nationals.
- Part of the international Angela Mortimer Group
- International reach – London, Birmingham, Paris, Lyon, Brussels, New York, Hong Kong and Sao Paulo
- SME business – under 250 staff – personal service, global reach.

# Who are we?

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## Verity Stokes

- BA (Hons) Mediaeval Studies – University of Birmingham
- 16 years recruitment experience
- Director of Katie Bard
- Co-founder graduate website AM CityGrad
- Winner BYPY 2015 for Recruitment, HR and Training

## Sandra Evans

- BSc (Hons) Psychology – University of Hull
- 6 years in agency recruitment
- 8 years in-house recruitment for retail/hospitality
- 5 years as a PA/Project Manager
- Joined Verity's team in January this year

# What is commercial awareness?

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Which of these statements best describes “commercial awareness”:

**A** “Knowledge of how **businesses make money**, what customers want, and what problems there are in particular areas of business”

**B** “Commercial awareness can be simply defined as staying up-to-date on daily **happenings and developments** in the business and commercial world.”

**C** “Commercial awareness is a **deep** understanding of both the **company** you work for and the **industry** it exists within.

# What do employers mean by 'commercially aware'?

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In an uncertain market, commercial awareness can help to both protect existing business ventures and create new opportunities.”

# How valued is it?

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The AGR 2016 Development Survey reported what percentage of their members were seeking this employability skill?

**A** 25%

**B** 50%

**C** 65%

**D** 80%

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**D** 80% is the correct answer!

# How valued is it?

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CBI Skills Survey in 2017, reported what percentage of employers say they are dissatisfied with the level of business and customer awareness they see in graduates?

**A** 12%

**B** 23%

**C** 41%

**D** 51%

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We hope to help you with this today!

katie bard

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A recent survey by the Association of Graduate Recruiters found leading firms believe Commercial Awareness was the number one skill graduates lacked the most.

**If you fully understand the challenges and the marketplace companies operate in, it will give you an upper hand when you start the role and throughout your career – it's not just to get you through the application and interview stage!**

# How does commercial awareness help you choose a career?

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- Career doesn't mean the same job. You may even find you have multiple careers over your working life.
- Plan ahead – where do you want your career to go? Plan the next 2-3 roles ahead to make sure your career is on track.
- Constantly reassess your goals and where you are in achieving them.

# Why industry matters

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  - Marketing – agency vs. in-house - externally facing, winning business, multiple clients and greater variety vs. more in-depth projects with one brand identity and message.

# So... Where do you start?

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- When researching a company or industry, start with broad research then narrow it down:
  - Industry trends
  - Economic trends
  - Global or UK based
  - Political events / legislation
  - What's the industry worth?
  - Who are major players?
  - Market share?

# Where do you search?

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- Use the chat to tell us where you would usually search when you start to research a company or industry
- What sources do you use?



# Where do you search?

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- The news
- Industry reports
- Professional bodies
- Competitors
- Glassdoor
- Company website – look at Investors section if they are a publicly owned company
- Company marketing
- Social media - LinkedIn, twitter etc.

# Annual reports

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- Or Report and Accounts - public companies publish these each year and can give you a wealth of information
- Find it in the Investors section of their website
- If the company isn't a Plc and doesn't have an annual report, google their competitors and find one who is, it will still give you an insight into the market conditions, challenges and risks they will also share

# Annual reports

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- Look at:
  - Locations & number of employees
  - Turnover and profit
  - The risks the organisation is facing
  - Performance – did they hit their targets last year?
  - Growth strategy or future plans
  - Market share
  - Who are their customers / suppliers
  - Values & culture – may base interview questions on their values
  - Board members & key people – look at their backgrounds, how have they progressed

# Networking!

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- Use University network
- Events hosted or sponsored by companies you are interested in
- Local networking groups
- Build a network on LinkedIn

# University

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- Use University resources:
  - Societies/groups
  - Events
  - Lecturers
  - Mentoring
  - Internal networking



# Interviews & Assessment Centres

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As we saw at the beginning of the webinar demonstrating your commercial awareness plays a key part in getting hired and is often highlighted in three areas during the selection process

1. The role – why do you want to work in Finance/HR/XX?
2. The organisation – what do you know about the company? Why do you want to work for us?
3. Assessments

# The role

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- Why are you interested in a career in Finance/HR/xx?
  - Be honest and enthusiastic
  - Be specific
  - Relate it back to the company
- This will show your understanding of your chosen field

# The role

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- Out of interest, are any of you interested in a career in HR?



# The role... an example

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OR

**B.** I was attracted to HR initially as I'm interested in how people work together in organisations and I think people are key to a company's success. A career in HR would give me the opportunity to help shape the future of the company.

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OR

**B.** I was attracted to HR initially as I'm interested in how people work together in organisations and I think people are key to a company's success. A career in HR would give me the opportunity to help shape the future of the company.

OR

**C.** I think a great HR team sits at the heart of the organisation and is key to the company's success. I'd be really interested in exploring that further and the areas that interest me are recruitment, training and employee engagement. I'd also like to find out more about the strategic planning side of HR as well, from my research into your industry it looks like there could be a lot of growth in the next 5 years in the UK.

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**B.** I really like working with figures and data and think finance would be a great career where I could study for professional qualifications.

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**A.** I like working with figures and analysing data.

OR

**B.** I really like working with figures and data and think finance would be a great career where I could study for professional qualifications.

OR

**C.** I enjoy working with financial data and would like to study for more qualifications plus I think that a great finance team is key to any company's success. I'd be particularly interested in finding out more about analysis, and business partnering as I develop my skills – I think this would be useful as I read the CFO's summary in your annual report for 2019 and saw that you're looking to grow your market share in the next 5 years by 10%.

# The organisation

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Why are you interested in working for us? What do you know about us?

- Show them all the research you've done!
- Practice this before your interview and have 3 sentences prepared that would sum up what you've learnt about them and where you got that information.
- Be honest – what is it that genuinely attracts you?
- Enthusiasm!

# What would your answer be?

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- Think of a role you are applying to, or would like to apply to
- What research have you done so far? What further research are you going to do?
- How are you going to answer the question “Why do you want to work for us?”



# Company values

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- Often used in competency based interview questions, so make sure you know what they are!
- Prepare an example for each one from your studies or work experience

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- Prepare an example for each one from your studies or work experience
- For example:
  - Make a difference – Tell us about a time when you've made a difference?
  - Work as a team – Give us an example of where you've worked well as a team? What happened? What was your contribution?
  - Continuous improvement – Tell us about a time you've improved a process?
  - Engagement – Tell us about a time when you've inspired others to be engaged in a target you were working towards? How did it go? What would you do differently?

# Assessments

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- Assessments can be technical and tailored to your subject but in graduate roles they are often looking for great leadership qualities too that match the company values
- Amongst others these can be tested in:
  - Group assessments
  - Practical problem solving exercises
  - In tray exercises
- How do you feel about these? Any examples of any you've taken part in?

# Assessment Centres

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- Often group exercises can be feel like the most stressful part of an assessment centre as they are completely unknown
- Don't panic! Stay calm and don't worry if you don't know the answers, you can still contribute by engaging others and asking questions:
  - So, how shall we approach this?
  - What's your understanding / opinion?
  - What do you think of X?
- Listen to people's ideas and don't talk over them
- Be aware of time - assign a timekeeper
- Be organised - sum up action points by priority in your last minute, assign who will do them by when

# Assessment Centres

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- General tips...
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- General tips...
- Don't compare yourself to others, just be confident that you have something to offer or you wouldn't have been invited to take part
- Use it as a good learning opportunity, once you've been through one assessment centre you'll be more confident for the next!
- Use opportunities in breaks to talk to the assessors if you can, ask them about what they do and their career with the company – it all gets brought up in the assessors' round up at the end of the day!

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# Any questions?

Feel free to contact us:

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[s.evans@katiebard.com](mailto:s.evans@katiebard.com)

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# Final thoughts...

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- Think about what you are going to do to improve your commercial awareness
- What ideas have you taken from this session?
- Commit to a couple of actions that you are going to put into practice

**Thank you!**

**katie bard**