Millennium
CLUB BULGARIA

Starting Your Career: A Practical Guide

Practical advice from professionals who’ve already started their careers

Prepared by Millennium Club Bulgaria

In collaboration with young professionals from various industries within the UK.

10 Tips for a Strong Start to Your Career

Starting your career can feel overwhelming, especially if you're not sure where to begin. We've been there too, and we know how stressful those first big decisions can feel. But it's also an exciting time, full of opportunities you might not even be aware of yet.

What matters is your attitude and approach. The tips below focus on what we've found to be crucial for a strong career start.

01 Start building your network early

Many opportunities come through relationships. Speak to people in different roles, attend events, and stay in touch. Pick your events, research your speakers or contacts of interest, and see where your ideas and values align. Go to them, ask questions, initiate conversations, and always follow up.

02 Get involved beyond your degree

Join societies, take on leadership roles, and contribute to projects. These experiences build confidence, skills, and stories you can talk about in interviews. They also show responsibility, multitasking skills, good time management and adaptibility, which is what employers are always looking for.

03 One good experience can be enough

You don't need a perfect CV. A single meaningful internship, placement, or scheme, like a vacation scheme, can open doors if you learn from it. Research which are the best programmes in your field of interest and prioritise them.

04 Be curious about your field

Go beyond lectures. Follow industry news and influential speakers to understand how things work in practice. Always ask "why". This stands out more than just academic knowledge and shows you're pationate, which is what employers value.

05 Build strong, practical skills

Focus on skills you'll actually use: communication, Excel/data analysis, organisation, attention to detail, or anything specific for your area of interest. If unsure what skills are recommended, go to the LinkedIn profile of someone in the industry and check their work experience and skills sections for insights.

06 Learn to communicate clearly and effectively

One of the most important skills would be effective communication. Whether explaining an idea, proving your case at an interview, writing an email, or speaking to a client - clear communication is a major differentiator. Train yourself to speak confidently, calmly and to the point.

07 Use AI wisely and responsibly

Stay on top of AI trends in your industry. Employers value people who are tech-savvy and can work efficiently. Use AI to improve things like your CV, but don't rely on it too heavily. Always check accuracy and be mindful of sensitive data or company policies.

08 Don't underestimate yourself - just go for it

Go for opportunities, even if they feel like a stretch. Apply and give it your best. You'll gain experience, expand your network, understand the process better, and improve each time, regardless of the outcome. Don't let a big name or a more senior role stop you.

09 Be prepared for rejection(s)

Even for top performers, rejection is a normal part of starting your career. You may apply to multiple roles before getting one, and sometimes you may not hear back at all. Treat it as part of the process: reflect, improve, and keep going.

10 There's more than one "right" path

While some industries have more linear pathways, many do not. It's normal to change direction as you learn more about what you enjoy and where your strengths lie. Stay open-minded and focus on progressing rather than being perfect.

Hear from Our Young Professionals

Maria Arsova, Investment Fund Sales at Amundi

1. How did you get into this role?
I got into this role through a combination of networking, internships and early exposure to finance through the societies at my university which helped me understand both the technical and client-facing sides of the industry. My path was rather unconventional in the sense that I didn't do an internship in the industry. Rather my leadership experiences throughout university (leading societies, analyst at the Bath investment club and team lead at a consulting project) helped me convey my accountability, maturity and dedication to the industry, so I was offered a full time role from the start.

I got my first role through intentional networking with the HR of the company who got to know me and put me through the interview process for a sales role within asset management that she thought suited my personality and capabilities.

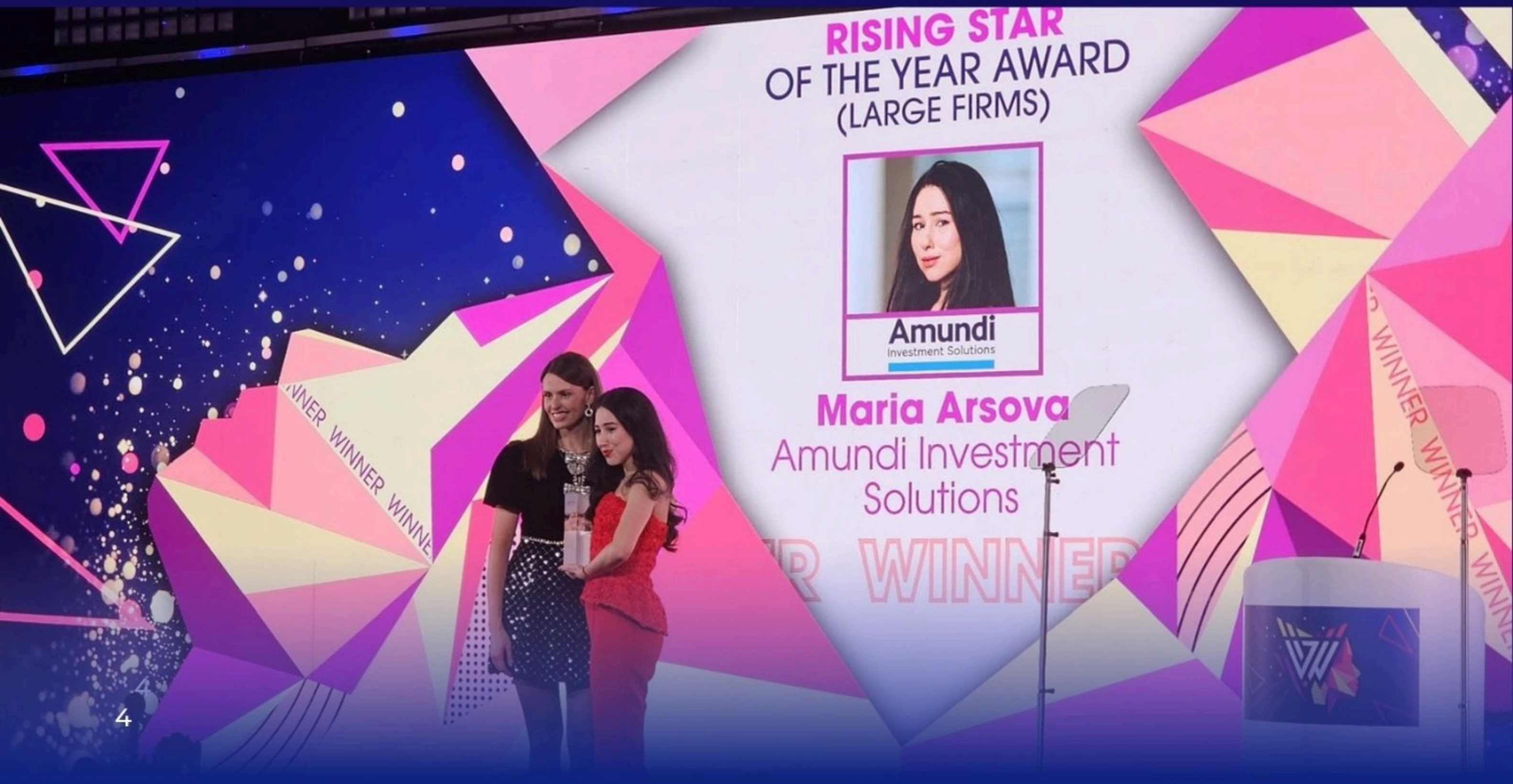
2. Are there any programmes that companies in your sector prefer?
Firms in asset management tend to recruit from a broad range of universities, but there is often a focus on strong academic performance and evidence of interest in finance. Degrees in finance, economics, or related fields can be helpful, although they are not strictly required. More important is demonstrating commercial awareness, market interest, and relevant experience through internships or extracurricular activities. Some firms also run graduate programmes that are structured entry points into roles like sales, research, or portfolio management. An external programme I can recommend is Amplify Trading.

3. What skills or experiences made a difference early in your career?
Strong understanding of financial markets and the ability to communicate ideas made a significant difference. Internships /placement year were especially valuable, as they provided practical exposure and helped me build confidence in a professional setting. I also found that being proactive whether through networking, asking questions, or seeking feedback accelerated my learning. In sales specifically, relationship-building and adaptability are key skills that set you apart early.

Maria Arsova, Investment Fund Sales at Amundi

4. What does a typical day / week look like in your role?
A typical day involves staying on top of market developments, preparing client materials, and engaging with clients through meetings or calls. There is a strong focus on understanding investor needs and positioning relevant investment strategies accordingly. Internally, I work closely with portfolio managers, product specialists, and other teams to ensure alignment. The role is quite dynamic, with a mix of analytical work, communication, and relationship management throughout the week. The most important characteristics I'd say is being proactive, entrepreneurial and thinking outside of the box. It is probably the one job in the industry where the books don't teach you a framework of decision making and success. Being self-driven & channeling your creative thinking are the drivers and those are all different for every individual.

5. What piece of advice would you give to someone interested in your field?
Be genuinely curious about markets and consistently build your understanding over time, as this will come across in interviews and conversations. Try to gain early exposure through internships, even if they're not perfectly aligned, as they help you understand the industry and build credibility. Networking is also incredibly important - many opportunities come from conversations rather than formal applications. Finally, don't underestimate the importance of communication skills, as they are just as critical as technical knowledge in client-facing roles.



Natali Georgieva, Trainee Solicitor at Clifford Chance

1. How did you get into this role?

I followed a relatively traditional route into law by studying it at university and then completing the required professional qualifications to become a solicitor. In terms of experience, I took part in one vacation scheme at a law firm, which proved to be very important. Vacation schemes are short placements that give you real insight into the work and are often used by firms to recruit future trainees. That single experience helped me understand the profession better and ultimately led to securing a training contract.

Now I am completing a two-year training contract, rotating through different departments before qualifying. This structured training is what prepares you for working as a corporate lawyer.

2. Are there any programmes that companies in your sector prefer?

Some large law firms do recruit heavily from well-known universities, but there is not a single “required” path. What matters more is strong academic performance, motivation, and an understanding of the commercial world.

There are also different routes into law - for example, if you did not study law at university, you can take a conversion course and still qualify. Firms also offer open days, insight schemes, and mentoring programmes, which can really help you get your foot in the door regardless of your background.

3. What skills or experiences made the biggest difference early in your career?

A few skills made a big difference early on:

- Attention to detail - legal work requires a high level of precision.
- Time management - you often manage multiple tasks and deadlines at once.
- Communication skills - explaining complex ideas clearly is key.
- Resilience and adaptability - it can be a demanding environment, especially at the beginning.

Even beyond law-related experience, things like leadership roles, organising events, or being involved in committees helped me develop confidence and organisational skills that are very relevant in a professional setting.

Natali Georgieva, Trainee Solicitor at Clifford Chance

4. What does a typical day / week look like in your role?

One of the most interesting aspects of working in a law firm is the variety. During my training, I have had exposure to a range of areas, including mergers and acquisition, finance, litigation and arbitration.

A typical day might involve reviewing and drafting documents, attending client calls, and working with colleagues across different teams depending on the matter. Some weeks are more deal-focused and fast-paced, while others involve more research, preparation, or advisory work.

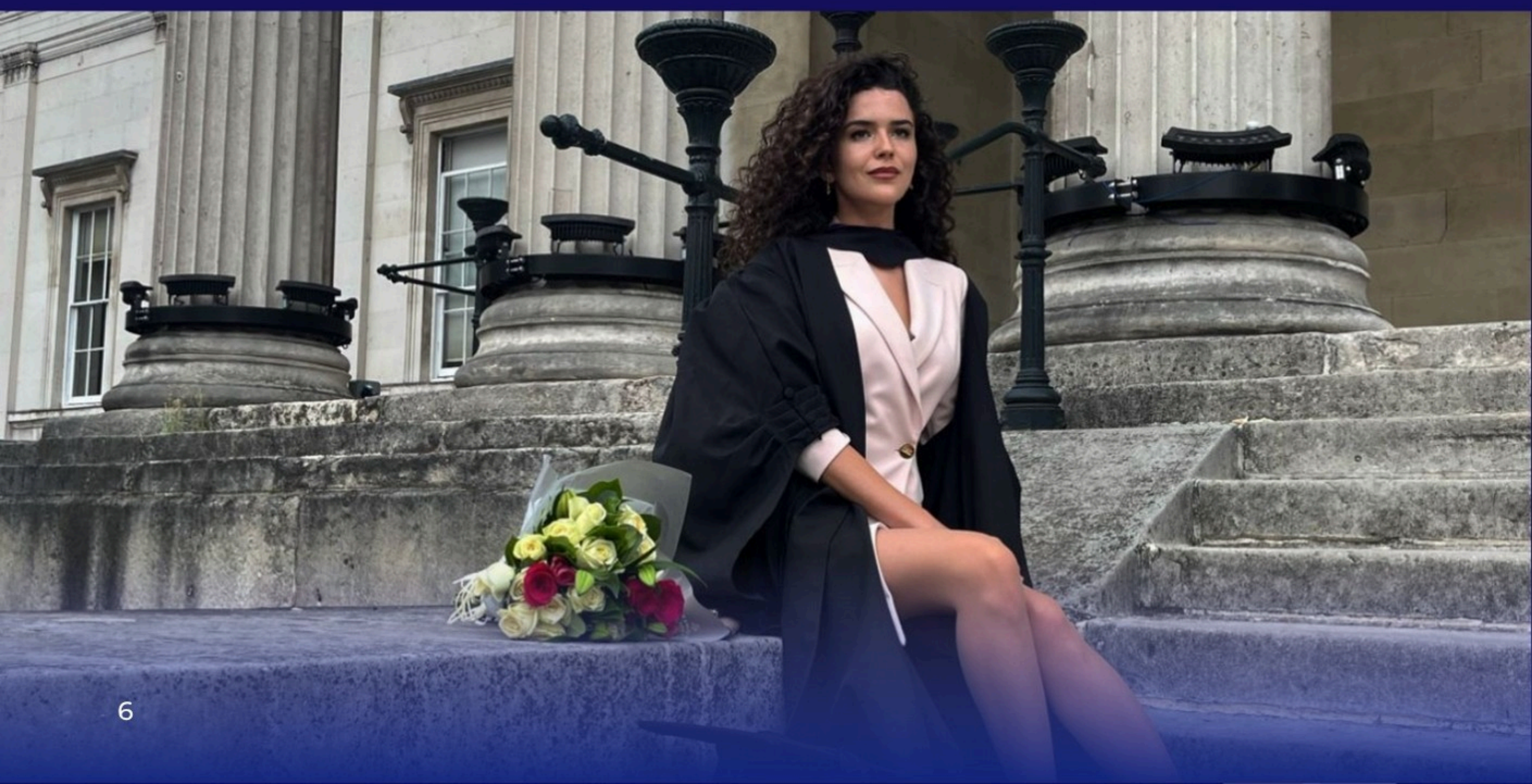
It is a collaborative environment, and you are constantly learning from the people around you.

5. What piece of advice would you give to someone interested in your field?

Do not feel like you need to have everything figured out early or that you need a perfect CV full of internships. Even one meaningful experience - like a single vacation scheme - can make a big difference if you learn from it and use it to guide your decisions.

Try to explore the field where you can, stay curious about how businesses work, and focus on building strong transferable skills like communication, organisation, and critical thinking.

Most importantly, be patient and persistent. It is a competitive path, but there is not just one "perfect" route into it.



Dimitar Balev, Product Analyst at Western Asset

1. How did you get into this role?
I started as an RFP Associate working closely with the Sales team at Western Asset, then transitioned internally. My background in Finance at the University of Bath and my strong interest in markets helped me secure my first steps.

2. Are there any programmes that companies in your sector prefer?
While companies tend to prefer top finance/economics universities, they prioritise proof of analytical thinking and showing genuine interest in markets.

3. What skills or experiences made the biggest difference early in your career?
Speaking of technical skills, these would be Excel & data analysis and understanding fixed income concepts. Other skills which definitely played a crucial role would be attention to detail and being able to clearly explain performance and ideas broadly speaking. Last, but not least: be a person that knows when to have fun and when to work hard is a benefit! (Not sure i do 😂)

4. What does a typical day / week look like in your role?
If I need to put it in a nutshell: Expanding the book of business, analyzing portfolio performance, writing attribution commentary, working with PMs, and preparing client materials.

5. What piece of advice would you give to someone interested in your field?
Learn markets deeply (not just theory), build strong Excel skills, and stay curious -understanding “why things move” is key.

Hear from ACS Alumni Across the UK

Global Markets Institutional Client Sales Professional
at Deutsche bank (Class of 2018)

1. How did you get into this role?
In my junior and senior years in ACS the Business club organised various meetings with successful entrepreneurs, people working in finance, and established business owners. Meeting some of them helped me come to the conclusion that I wanted to go into finance which is why I applied for Economics majors. Once I started my programme, I made sure to attend different networking events and job fairs where I learned how important it is to secure an internship early on during your studies. I started applying to different banks/financial firms for their spring insight and internship programmes. I did one internship every summer during my Bachelor's which helped me secure a job straight out of university.

2. Are there any programmes that companies in your sector prefer?
While financial companies still have a bias/preference for top ranked business and economics schools, nowadays it feels like the way you present yourself and the work experience you have gained during uni holds more weight. In terms of programmes, the most common ones are Economics, Finance, Business and Math, but people with different backgrounds are also well considered.

3. What skills or experiences made the biggest difference early in your career?
Being organised and time efficient was one of the most helpful skills early in my career as studying and applying for internships can be overwhelming and time consuming. Interpersonal skills are also of great importance as making a good impression at work fairs and meeting the right people can help you position yourself better when finding a job.

Global Markets Institutional Client Sales Professional
at Deutsche bank (Class of 2018)

4. What does a typical day / week look like in your role?
A typical day in Sales & Trading starts early near 7:00am - I catch up with overnight market events and moves from overnight, looking at key market news (interest rates, inflation data, politics, central bank comments, etc.). Once markets open, the day becomes very fast-paced. I spend most of the day watching market moves, speaking to clients, and pricing trades. Clients might call asking for levels on bonds, currencies or derivatives, or asking what is driving the markets. I also work closely with traders to execute trades and manage risk. Throughout the day, there are often major events like economic data releases (inflation, jobs numbers) that can move markets quickly. Overall, it's a role where you're constantly learning because markets change every day.

5. What piece of advice would you give to someone interested in your field?
My biggest advice is: be genuinely curious about the world and about a job in finance.

Finance isn't just about numbers—it's about understanding how global events affect markets. If you can build the habit of reading the news, following markets, and asking "why is this happening?", you'll already be ahead.

Also, don't feel like you need to be a math genius. What matters most is being quick-thinking, hardworking, good under pressure, and able to communicate clearly. The key personality trait any employer is looking for is that you are hungry to learn and become better every day.

Iva Valcheva, Production Coordinator at Paramount (Film & TV; Class of 2018)

1. How did you get into this role?

Growing up, I was always passionate about storytelling and creative expression. As a child, I did acting for 12 years. During my time at ACS, I hosted the annual Christmas concerts and Arts Fest stages, served as photographer and videographer at events such as Faculty Follies, Last Bell, and Halloween. Most of all, at ACS I was able to explore my passion for filmmaking thanks to the freedom we were often given for our assignments to take any form we want – for me, this always meant making a video. Creating short films for classes such as English, Biology and Physics, I ended up building the portfolio I then got into film school with.

After ACS, I moved to London to study Film and Television at UAL: University of the Arts London. At university, I made sure to try out various roles, ultimately specialising in Directing and Producing in my final year. After obtaining my BA, I spent a few months as a freelance Producer and Production Assistant working on music videos, short films and fashion projects before landing my first full time job as a Junior Producer at a video production company mostly focusing on commercials. Nearly 5 years later, today I'm a Production Coordinator at Paramount, working for the television broadcaster Channel 5.

2. Are there any programmes that companies in your sector prefer?

Whether a successful career in film and television requires a specialised university degree is an age-old question. But what is undoubtedly extremely highly valued in the creative industries is having a plethora of practical experience, a large and varied portfolio. To have worked on all sorts of creative projects – no matter their size, your role, oftentimes even no matter the final result. To creative employers, it matters for you to be able to evidence having been proactive and taken part in the making of different creative media, gaining varied experience, knowledge and skills. A university degree in film and television is one proven path to unlocking such opportunities – it may not be the only one, but it's the one I chose.

Additionally, you can also look at obtaining certificates for different aspects of production by completing short online courses from providers such as ScreenSkills and Albert in the UK, for example the widely regarded Albert Training on Climate Change and Sustainable Production.

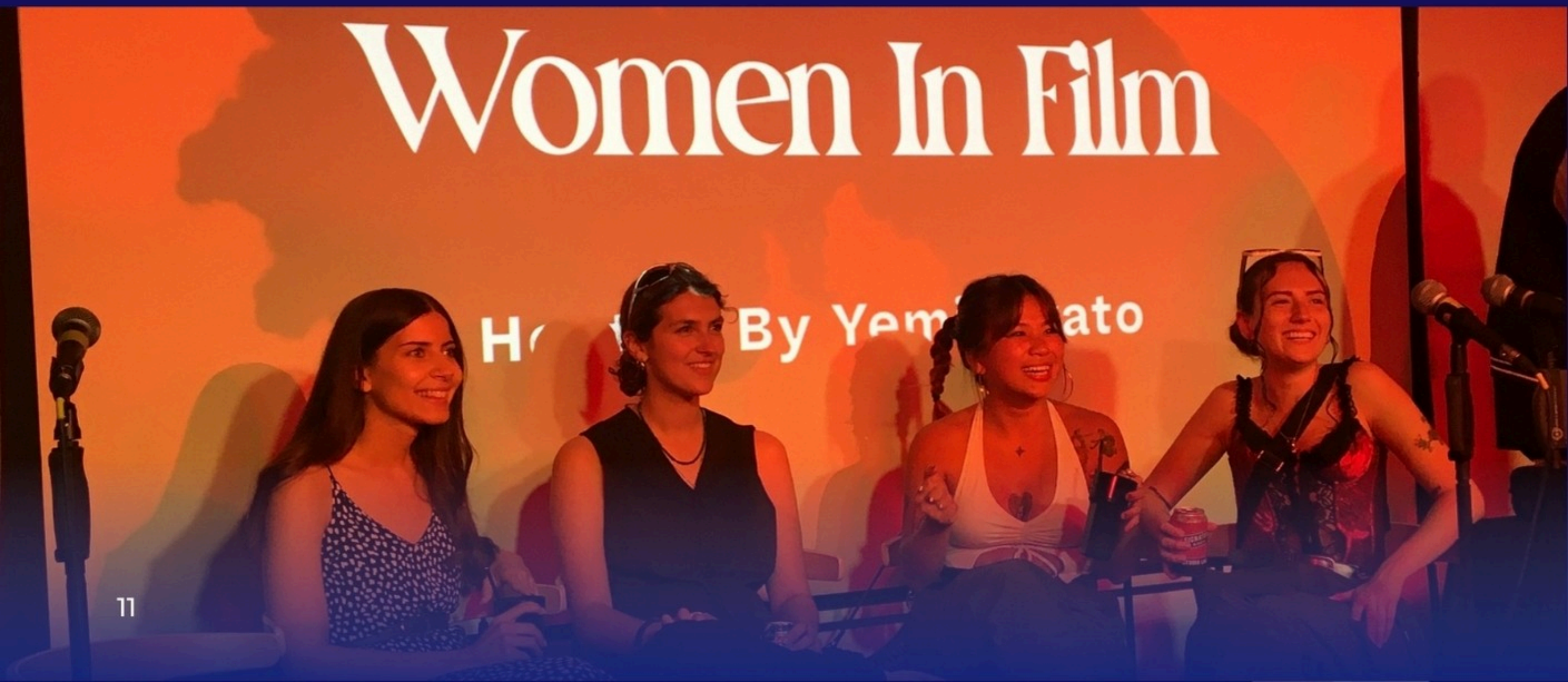
Iva Valcheva, Production Coordinator at Paramount
(Film & TV; Class of 2018)

3. What skills or experiences made the biggest difference early in your career?

Other than the above – taking any opportunity to join an existing project, go on set, and practice creative collaboration – there are two other key things which have helped me early on in my creative career. One has been continuing to make my own art in my free time – essential to finding my creative voice and defining my visual style, as well as allowing me a space to practice all parts of production at low stakes, free to experiment and make mistakes. The second was creating a website / archive of all my work, the link to which I then included on top of my CV, as it is extremely valuable for creative employers to be able to visually and interactively explore the projects you actually can and have worked on.

4. What does a typical day / week look like in your role?

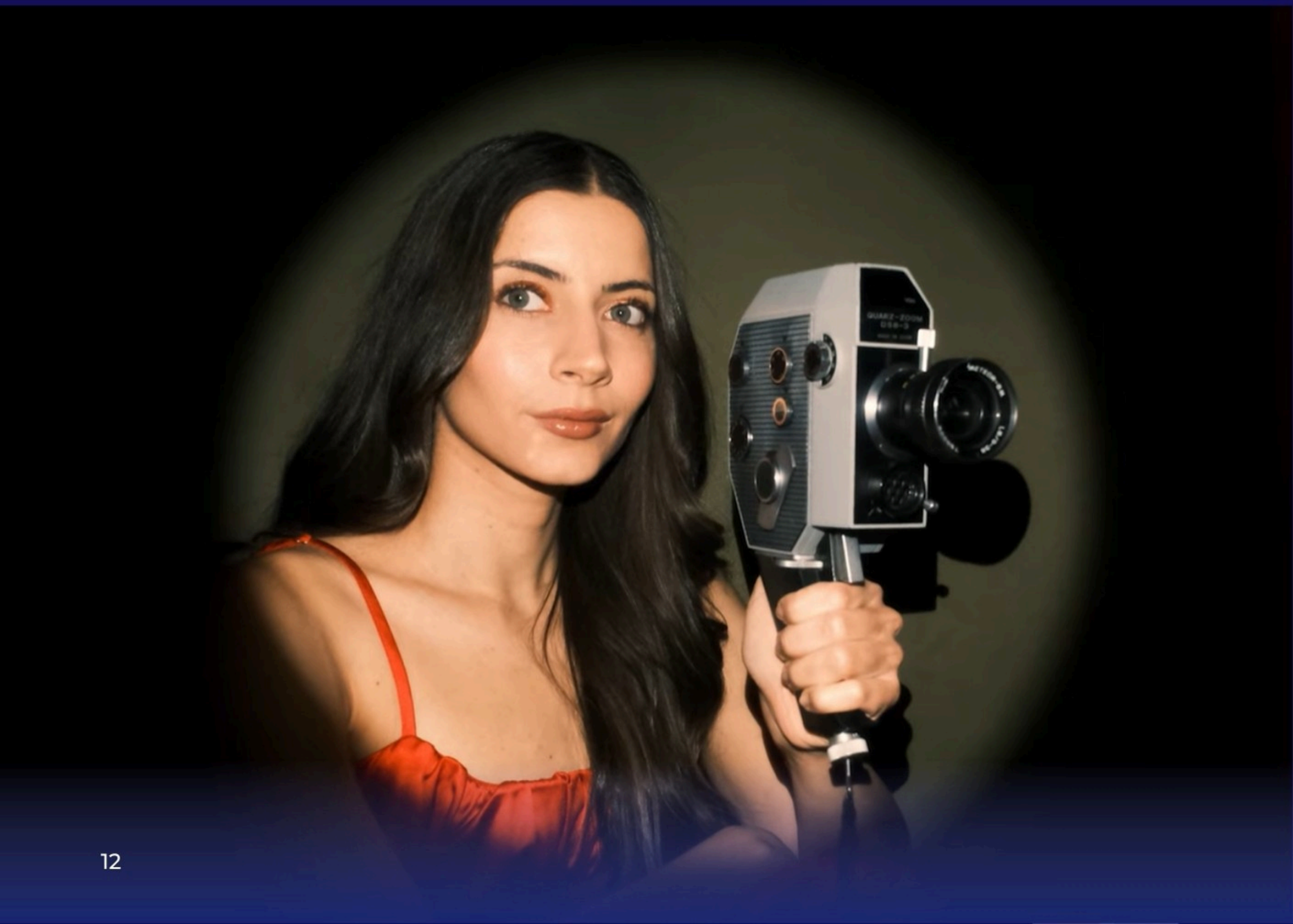
In my current role as Production Coordinator at Paramount on the Channel 5 team, working in the promotional department, a typical week encompasses all stereotypes about working in television – it's intense, demanding, quick, reactive, and ever-changing. Once the television schedule for the next 2 weeks is confirmed – what shows and films will play out when – we make a breakdown of all promotional material which needs to be created to advertise the programmes. Then, for each project, we assign teams, put together schedules, work out budgets, reach out to production companies for material, reach out to any talent we want to work with – actors, presenters, or voiceover artists – and begin editing the trailers and key art (posters). These end up on television, streaming platforms, sometimes on buses, billboards, or even in cinemas.



Iva Valcheva, Production Coordinator at Paramount
(Film & TV; Class of 2018)

5. What piece of advice would you give to someone interested in your field?
Creative careers are unlike many others – they are a lot less linear, the path forward is a lot less clear, and a lot less straightforward. Oftentimes it's not as simple as applying for a job on a website – many of these jobs aren't even advertised. My first piece of advise would be to only go for it if you really, truly, passionately love it. Of course, you're free to give it a try and see if it's right for you – it's okay if it turns out it is, and it's okay if it turns out it isn't. But it's not a career path worth going down if you're not ready to fight for it. And if you do choose a creative career, my next piece of advice would be to try and be inventive about the next steps – how you find work and grow. It is a space where creativity and venturing off the beaten path is rewarded.

The following image is from Iva's latest video 'Shooting on my granddad's super 8 camera for the 1st time', which you can find on YouTube.



Virjinia Vassileva, Marketing & Event Management
Freelance (Class of 2018)

1. How did you get into this role?
Ever since little I've always been pationate about events and planning. I've been obsessed with keeping track of everything and creating something with my own hands. I still remember one of my birthday parties, where I created a full 1-hour long treasure hunt for my guests. I painted maps, created multiple puzzles, and had 10-page documents for my parents with guidelines as they were the “guides”, while I was hiding. Back at ACS, together with a friend we established the Career Orientation Club, where we hosted various panels and a full-scope Career Fair (great to see these are flourishing now!).

However, doing event management as a degree felt somehow "not serious enough" at the time, and I went for Political Economy and Media. While I enjoyed most of my courses, my heart was with our student’s newspaper. After a year as a writer, I became Deputy editor, where I was leading multiple teams, writing, editing, and designing all of our issues (print and digital). This, together with a few summer interships in marketing and event management, led to my first full-time job as a Digital Marketing Coordinator. As it was a fully remote one, I was able to combine it with an MA in Digital Marketing in Sheffield. After my MA, I wanted to return to London due to the city’s dynamic nature. I found my next job, where I worked in a Growth Marketing team of an industry leader for 3 years before recently switching to freelance work.

2. Are there any programmes that companies in your sector prefer?
While employers might still be impressed by certain university names or certifications, this has become more and more rare. What they really look for is proof for your genuine interest and desire to learn and grow, and most importantly - having a positive attitude. As in this industry, standards, trends and interests change all the time, employers value soft skills more than hard ones. Anyone could be taught how to create a Google Ad campaign or how to arrange tables at a venue, but knowing how to speak with different types of customers, prospects and vendors is really what differentiates hobby marketers and event planners from experts.

Virjinia Vassileva, Marketing & Event Management Freelance (Class of 2018)

3. What skills or experiences made the biggest difference early in your career?

After I became closer with my managers at my most recent company, I asked them “Why me?”. The answer was that they had been impressed by my proactivity, time management and leadership skills that became evident through my examples from interships, exracurricular activities, and working full-time while obtaining an MA . But most importantly, they said it was my positive attitude. In such a dynamic industry where often you have factors outside of your control, remaining calm, thinking quickly and rationally, and being able to improvise on the spot, are key.

4. What does a typical day / week look like in your role?

In bigger companies you might be specialising in a single field, but in smaller ones - you need to have knowledge on different grounds. In my last company I was working both within digital (online campaigns) and field marketing (events). No other day was the same. I’ve had days where I’ve hosted a webinar in the morning, spent hours cross-checking databases for another campaign, and then rushed off for venue site checks for a completely different project. Then I’ve had days where I’ve done competitor analysis all day long. As a freelancer the situation looks similar. You need to be your own “Jack of all trades” and you need to know your contacts well.

5. What piece of advice would you give to someone interested in your field?

Attend industry events, ask questions and speak to people. In the marketing and events industry networking is key, especially if you decide to move to freelance. You need to know your competitors, your supporters, what your customers want and need, the vendors and venues. I’d recommend creating simple processes and templates - they help you streamline your work, visualise progress and highlight missing parts. Try to remain calm and positive - people prefer working with those they get along with. And most importantly - ALWAYS create your own deadlines. Anything could happen, so adding at least an extra week (where possible) can make the difference between great success and failure.

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