

[Music]

Female: I just always remember running up to the windows, pressing my nose against the glass and watching the planes come in.

Male: My mum, she's a very loving natured person so you know when she's serious it means something.

Male: Wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself.

Female: That's pretty much when my whole life changed.

[Music]

Female: What we do day-to-day for each of us is our own contribution to the world, regardless of your occupation. But can each of us find something that we are truly passionate about, that we can be proud of, and that can make us excited to get up every Monday morning? In this series we chat to people who are out there doing just that, doing what they describe as exactly what they love to do.

Respondent: It was probably one of the hardest things that I've ever had to do. Nobody wants to tell their parents that their plan for you is not for you and I just remember the look on their faces when I told them what I wanted to do and it was just disappointment.

Interviewer: Rachel is ambitious, tenacious, driven and incredibly focused on what she wants out of life. We had the opportunity to sit down with Rachel and have a conversation.

Thanks so much for joining us Rachel. I thought we could start with you introducing yourself.

Respondent: My name is Rachel Bacon. I'm an International Sales and Business Development Manager.

Interviewer: So if we could take a snapshot of your life right now, how would you describe it?

Respondent: I'm very happy where I am now. I'm really lucky and really blessed and so happy to be doing something that I absolutely love every day. It's a joy to wake up in the morning and put on my workwear and go to work.

Most people would be like "oh, can't believe it's Monday", but I'm there thinking to myself "I can't wait for the new week to start", because I get to do what I love every day.

Interviewer: Wow, that is an incredible place to be, to be doing something that you really love. Has it always been that way for you?

Respondent: I guess I am an example of someone who's gone through the different challenges that there are, I guess pursuing your career and your dream and your passion.

Interviewer: Oh OK, so what kind of challenges?

Respondent: When I was a little girl growing up in Hong Kong, my parents told me I should be a Lawyer or a Doctor or an accountant and because I didn't know any better, that's what I thought that's what I wanted to be, so when I was in high school and when I had to choose what I wanted to do afterwards, I pretty much did what my parents wanted me to do, which was as I found out the hard way, wasn't what I wanted to do.

Interviewer: I'm sure so many people can relate to that. Nobody wants to disappoint their parents. So, how far down the road of your parents dreams did you get before you realised it wasn't quite for you?

Respondent: I studied a Bachelor of Engineering, Megatronics at University. When I was studying at University, I really enjoyed it however, I just realised it wasn't for me. I was always wanting to do something a little more hands-on, a little more involved. The moment when it clicked for me was really when someone told me to pursue something that I was really passionate about, because if I had to do something for the rest of my life and it was something that was going to be a chore, then I didn't enjoy it.

They basically told me that if I don't have the love and the passion, then I shouldn't pursue it.

Interviewer: And that is great advice. I think you've hit on something really interesting. I think in this day and age, so many of us are told to pursue our passions, but actually finding what we're passionate about I think can be really difficult. Have you always known what you wanted to do?

Respondent: I just wanted to be an Engineer. I wanted to work at the airport. I loved airplanes. When I was little; we grew up in an apartment building, very close to the flight path at Kai Tak International Airport and so aircraft would constantly fly past on their way into the airport and I always just remember running up to the windows, pressing my nose against the glass and watching the planes come in, but in hindsight I'm like "oh yeah, that was something I really loved for a long time". I never really sort of sat down and said that was something I really enjoyed. It was more like a passing hobby. Some people like to look at fast cars and I was always looking at the sky, looking at airplanes.

Interviewer: So you're studying at University, you know you have a love of planes and you want to work at the airport. Tell us what happens next.

Respondent: So one of the hardest decisions I had to make was basically deciding whether or not I wanted to continue with my degree or if I wanted to pursue my passion in aviation, in more of a trade and it was probably one of the hardest things that I've ever had to do, because it meant that I would almost be a disappointment to my parents, because they'd invested so much time and money and I've chosen to pursue something that was not their dream for me, but was what I wanted to do.

Parents always want the best for their children, but it's not their sort of decision and it's very hard for them to know what you want to do and it's very confusing and quite conflicting as a child not knowing whether you want to be true to yourself or try and please others, so it was definitely a very difficult decision.

Nobody wants to tell their parents that their plan for you is not for you and I just remember the look on their faces when I told them what I wanted to do and it was just disappointment and it was really difficult.

Interviewer: That is an incredibly hard situation and I'm sure a very difficult decision. It's not easy to stop and reflect on life and what you're doing and any given time and I guess be willing to pursue something that doesn't have the approval of the people that you care about. That must have taken a lot of guts.

Respondent: For me to pursue my passion, it took a lot of tenacity, it took a lot of courage and it definitely challenged me, but for the better.

Having gone through that, I definitely know I'm a lot stronger than I thought I was and that I definitely made the right decision and that I always knew what I wanted to do and that I was true to myself.

Basically, I could go my whole life being what everyone else wants me to be, to do what people want me to do, to say the things that they want me to say, but it's not me and I never want to be anything other than myself.

Interviewer: So you're at University and you've discovered that your actual passion is really working on the aircraft, so what happened next?

Respondent: I remember that I was looking at other opportunities in other areas to study within aviation and I actually attended a careers fair at Southbank and I got talking to one of the people at the stalls and they actually said "would you

ever consider doing an apprenticeship?” When I found out a little bit more, I couldn’t believe that the job I wanted to do, was actually a vocation.

So, I studied a Certificate IV in Aeroskills, Avionics at Aviation Australia. It was a very intensive course where we did all our theory up front, but there was also some practical involved. After completing my course, I did a four year apprenticeship, which I managed to finish in three, because it is competency based and I was able to tick off all of those competencies within a short period of time.

Interviewer: So I find your pathway really interesting and it is really against the norm. Can you tell us a little bit more about the transition from University to vocational education and training?

Respondent: The vocational pathway that I took was definitely quite academic. There was a lot of maths, physics, aerodynamics involved. It’s quite intensive when you’re working with a piece of machinery that carries hundreds of people and is made up of millions of parts. It’s not as simple as it looks.

A lot of people have a lot of misconceptions about vocational education and training and for me, I don’t see it as a lesser or lower option. In fact, it’s on parallel with a tertiary qualification and in fact, it gave me the launching pad for a very successful career.

So, having done both tertiary and vocational education, I really found that my vocation has provided me the best opportunity and training for what I wanted to do in my career.

Interviewer: So you’re a qualified Aircraft Maintenance Engineer and I’m guessing at that point, you’re now heading into that daunting process of finding a job. You’re here with us today and we know you’ve had a successful career, but what do you think helped you find that very first job?

Respondent: Like anything, you’ve got to be really proactive when you’re looking for jobs and opportunities. I know a lot of people in my class were just sitting back waiting for these opportunities to come knocking for them and I was the opposite. I had my resume in my hand and I approached everyone and anyone and said “hey, this is me. I’d love a job, I’d love an opportunity” and some of the best advice I received was “make yourself indispensable and so when you’re not around, they’ll miss you”. So, that was the attitude that I went into when I gained my apprenticeship. So, I worked my little backside off to make sure I was indispensable and when I wasn’t around, I was missed.

Interviewer: So, made yourself indispensable and then when you’re not around, they’ll miss you. I completely agree with that. So, what was your first day like?

Respondent: My first day on the job as a new graduate, daunting I guess, to know that here you are all of a sudden, having this opportunity to work on a piece of machinery that's worth millions of dollars and potentially having the lives of over 200 people in your hands and it definitely was not what I was expecting, but in a good way. It was a lot more challenging, you'll get your up's and your down's, your good days and your bad days, but it's all part and parcel of the job.

Interviewer: So at the start of the conversation, you introduced yourself as an International Sales and Business Development Manager. I get the sense that there was a little bit more study in there. Can you tell us about that and maybe what you're up to now?

Respondent: For me, I've always been ambitious, so I always invested a lot in my education and I never really knew where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do, but after completing my apprenticeship and achieving my Cert IV, I actually went on and studied my Diploma of Aircraft Maintenance Engineering as well, so I became a licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer on Category B.2., which is Avionics and then I went on and did a Diploma of Management, so while I was an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer by trade, I now work as an International Sales and Business Development Manager for the R.T.O. that I actually trained with and it was just an opportunity that came up and I think it was more because I'd been in that area and I had a good reputation and I was just really fortunate.

Interviewer: So we know you've been awarded at the Australian Training Awards and it sounds like you're definitely a mentor for others. Would you consider yourself an inspiration?

Respondent: I never thought I'd be in the position and in the role that I'm in now and here I am! I've had instances where I've had young girls come up to me and said "I've seen a video of you from the Australian Training Awards and I always thought that I wanted to do something..." It doesn't have to be aviation or engineering, but it could be like "I wanted to do this, but I never had the courage and seeing your story and hearing what you went through really inspired me".

Interviewer: Well there you go. I think that definitely answers the question. It's a courageous adventure that you've been on and one you should be really proud of and to your parents, is it safe to say they're pleased with the decisions you've made?

Respondent: My parents are still coming to terms with the fact that I guess a vocation actually gave me the platform to a very successful career. It's really difficult, because it's in our culture that in order to be successful that you've

got to have all these degrees and qualifications, but in fact, it's not the case, so for them it's slow change, but it's happening, a change.

It's really great to see that I'm a living example of change for not only myself, but also for my family. It's still a long road, but they're coming around and realising that I've had a wonderful career and I still have a lot ahead of me.

For me to be able to pursue my dreams is just such a blessing. I'm so incredibly lucky to work in the aviation industry. Every day it's new, it's exciting. I'm definitely more passionate, more driven, more determined to succeed, because I'm in an area that I love.

Interviewer: Each person that we speak to in this podcast series is a graduate. A graduate of vocational education and training. This podcast is funded by the Australian Government, Department of Education and Training. For more information on vocational education and training, please visit myskills.gov.au