

## Work Shift Episode 8 – Work Integrated Learning with Brien Convery and Dario Guescini

[music]

CHILD 1: When I grow up, I want to be a contractor because I like building stuff.

CHILD 2: When I grow up, I wanna be a stunt double.

CHILD 3: When I grow up, I want to be an astronaut and travel to Mars.

RAY HARRIPAUL: It's the age-old problem for recent grads and for those who are trying to break into a new industry: how do you get the job if you don't have professional experience?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Oh, yeah. And when it comes to getting a job, they say it's not *what* you know it's *who* you know. So, how do you get a job if you don't know anyone? Argh. Frustrating.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Well Shawne, there's a solution. WIL.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Who's that?

RAY HARRIPAUL: It's not a who, it's a what.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: What?

RAY HARRIPAUL: W-I-L. It stands for Work Integrated Learning. It's a term that covers all the ways you can learn by doing: co-ops, field placements, applied research projects, apprenticeships and more.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: It's important. In the 2019 federal budget, the government earmarked \$800 million to create more work integrated learning opportunities and partnerships. It's an important way for students to gain real world experience, make important professional connections and flex those soft skills on your digital platforms and in real life. Stay with us for a great conversation about work integrated learning and find out what's in it for both employers and students.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Welcome to *Work Shift*.

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BRIEN CONVERY: Be open-minded to that experience. I think work integrated learning or learning comes in different forms and fashions. Some students of today that might have experienced being a student a few years ago, it's definitely changed. The classroom's changed; co-curriculum things are happening with employers; there's more things happening in and out

of the classrooms and labs and everything else. So I think just being open-minded to the different experiences will make that person be that much more marketable.

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RAY HARRIPAUL: Digital disruption

SHAWNE McKEOWN: The gig economy.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Artificial intelligence.

(synthesized voice) Robots.

RAY HARRIPAUL: There's a lot of talk about these things in the media and online but what do they mean for you?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: I'm Shawne McKeown.

RAY HARRIPAUL: And I'm Ray Harripaul.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: We are exploring the future of work and changes you can expect to see at your job.

RAY HARRIPAUL: We'll tell you how this massive digital shift could change your career and what you can do to adapt, evolve and thrive.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Today we're talking about how expanding work integrated learning opportunities at college and university can help set you up for success whether you are new to the work force or you're back at school to make a career change.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Today were talking to Brien Convery, RBC's Director of Early Talent Acquisition and to Dario Guescini, George Brown College's Director of Work Integrated Learning and Experiential Education. So before we get started, let's find out what we mean when we say 'work integrated learning'.

DARIO GUESCINI: The name says it all. It's the integration of learning with work. What are we doing with our students that are helping them develop skills that will make it easier for them to transition to the workplace?

BRIEN CONVERY: My name's Brien Convery and I am the Director of Early Talent Acquisition for RBC; also a fancy name for campus recruitment. I basically hire the students across Canada into all jobs and roles at the bank; everything from HR to wealth management to technology and everything in between and everywhere from Vancouver to Montreal to Halifax and here in

Toronto. From an employer perspective, for us work integrated learning is really giving the students the chance to practice what they've learned.

RAY HARRIPAUL: There are more options than ever when it comes to students getting workplace experience. So how do you narrow it down?

BRIEN CONVERY: There's a lot of confusion. Students are super confused about how do they map that journey to find that first role or that first opportunity. There's a lot of information coming at them we know the influencers in this system: their friends, their parents, their-- you know, different people giving them advice, the internet. Everything's there and available; however, a lot of that information sometimes is misguided or interpreted in the wrong way. I saw a statistic that 95% of parents give their children career advice and 3% get it right. I'd say that's probably about right. The idea that you're a student in business and finance and that that's a direct linear path to your co-op or internship or your work integrated learning experience is no longer. You could do what you want with your degree. Couple examples I can share is we've had a variety of degrees and diplomas coming into RBC. We have biology majors on the trading floor. We have musical theatre majors in private banking. We have-- you name it, liberal arts students all engaged in all areas of the bank. So what, if anything, from this conversation to demystify is that we hire from all schools, all universities, all colleges, all programs.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: So you're going out on a work placement. Does that mean you will be picking up coffees and making copies?

BRIEN CONVERY: We've all seen the TVs and movies and different things out there around, you know, the interns and the folks getting coffee but we don't look at that as the opportunity for advancement. We look at giving students meaningful work and responsibility from the day they start with us. So as it looks at creating this universal student experience which we have at RBC, part of that is educating first the managers who are employing a student. It's a very different ballgame when you're employing an 18 or 19 year old young person in the work force than it is a full time employee. So things like feedback and guidance and coaching and mentorship, all those things come with that experience. If you don't train your workforce to be able to manage youth and to be there as an adviser, then you're missing the ball.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Students learn how to use relevant technologies at school and in their placements. And Brien says he seeing more and more students who are picking up new tech skills on their own.

BRIEN CONVERY: You know, YouTube is a big one that they learn different skills on. I think that from that perspective I see a lot more innovation on the youth side to learn new skills beyond just the classroom and beyond just the employment. So it's pretty exciting, you know, to see and to your point directly to your question when you think of skills like Python or new technologies and that's not even that new anymore; I'm probably dating myself. But when you look at students coming in saying I have six months of Python and we think, wow, that's not

that much experience. Well, if it's been out for six months, that's a lot of experience, right? It's more than our own technology leaders have. So 100% they are out and looking and gaining those skills with ears out trying to figure out what's the next thing to learn.

DARIO GUESCINI: Teaching technology for our students is teaching our students how to learn. Help them learn how to learn; be resilient; be adaptable and then partner with the right people and with the right organizations for them to practice those skills.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: So while we're talking about students on work placement, are you imagining people in their late teens or early twenties? How about mature students? People returning to school to reskill and upgrade. People looking to make a career pivot. Brien and Dario share some advice for them.

BRIEN CONVERY: My advice to those individuals is first step, you took the step to go get the extra credentials and the extra experience so good on you to begin with; that shows initiative, right? And that you want to better yourself so that's awesome. I think then be open-minded to that experience. I think, you know, again back to Dario's point that work integrated learning or learning comes in different forms and fashions. Some students of today that might have experienced being a student a few years ago, it's definitely changed. The classroom's changed, co-curriculum things are happening with employers. There's, you know, more things happening in and out of the classrooms and labs and everything else so I think just being open-minded to the different experiences will make that person be that much more marketable as well as being able to capture those learning moments. I find whether it's new grads or students or people returning to upskill, talking about yourself and talking about your skills, it doesn't come naturally to many. And so I do find quite often pulling skills out of people to kind of get to what they've learned. So I think one advice is be proud about what you're doing and be articulate about what you're doing and share that with potential employers as well as others. I think that's one area that making that transition from school to work and knowing how to talk about yourself and talk about the skills that you've gained is a tricky one for many; however, if you really kind of focus and think about what you've learned and look at the future of work and the future skills, this is what you're getting in your education so speak about it, call it out and be proud.

DARIO GUESCINI: I would like to share personal example on this. I'm an immigrant. I came to Canada a few years ago and as a mature student but let's call it a mature professional. I had my education; work experience and I came just to study. I started my studies again. I changed careers from engineering to human resources and I'm a product of a WIL opportunity. Part of the program I had a wheel opportunity and my advice to those who are changing careers or are, you know, upskilling their knowledge is to-- don't be afraid to do what is required. Do it, whatever is required and do your best. Give that 100% plus. That great attitude and show that you are willing to keep learning regardless of where you are. Show that your passionate about what you do and opportunities will present. So my advice is that. It's not easy to start again sometimes and we have many of those at the college. Many students going through a transition of changing careers so upskilling their credentials. But it's about that. Take one step at a time

and do meaningful networking. Don't be afraid of telling people what you want or what you're looking for. Talk to the right people and don't be afraid to share what you're looking for.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Okay. It's the end of your first day in this new work placement. Things are going well, you've met new people, made a little small talk. Now, you open up that LinkedIn app on your phone and prepare to fire off a barrage of connection requests.

DARIO GUESCINI: Don't send a LinkedIn request without a proper introduction unless you know the person really well. Please, write a sentence: "Hey, I met you today. Great meeting you. Would love to be connected with you."

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Do you have people try to connect with you on other platforms that aren't your professional platforms?

BRIEN CONVERY: Twitter. I actually do but not typically students these days but I think it's a hard sell to kind of get noticed through a LinkedIn DM or an Instagram or even through your resume. You know, we ourselves are inundated with resumes for jobs to the point of too many. As an example, this summer we had 35,000 individual students apply for the job at RBC. 35,000! So standing out in a resume pile of 35,000 individuals is not gonna make it. So we talked very heavily about this with our friends like Dario and others at George Brown College that we need to help the students stand out but stand out in different ways. Stand out at the events, come out and talk, network again with purpose. I have quite a bit of content out there on LinkedIn about how to make your LinkedIn profile-- how to humanize your LinkedIn profile. It's a blog I have out there. If you look at some of the LinkedIn profiles now, they are bringing more of a humanized touch. You look at the real estate you have. You have seconds-- seconds to impress someone who's looking at your profile beyond the resume which is where we usually go is LinkedIn. First of all, students need to have one. Secondly, professional pictures. Use the small screen space on a phone to tell your story. Humanize who you are. I don't need to see that you're a student at George Brown College. How about you're a passionate finance student at George Brown College specializing in human resources. That says a heck of a lot more about you. Or, you know, use your skill sets that you're learning and update them on LinkedIn. Don't have Word, Microsoft and PowerPoint as your top three skills. I hope so. What I want to see is leadership, communications, time management, different skills that we're looking for. So LinkedIn has become a platform where I myself probably 10 years ago said, "Why do I need it?" I'm just copying my resume into another platform but it's become so much more. It's become a way to really highlight who you are and also to share blogs about your experience. Talk about what you're doing. You have a student here right now who is a RBC Student Ambassador as part of George Brown College and she's blogging about her experience on LinkedIn. She's come back to the campus as an extension of my team to run events. She started a tech club for students here herself. So, you know, students are getting engaged in a much more organized and meaningful way too. So if you're not on LinkedIn, then you're not, you know, using the platforms to kind of tell your story. It's all about storytelling.

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SHAWNE McKEOWN: It's time to take a look at the future want ads.

RAY HARRIPAUL: We're gonna ask our guests to give us an outline of a job that doesn't exist yet. According to the Institute of the Future, a non-profit think tank based in Palo Alto, California, 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Okay. Dario Guescini, what have you got for us?

DARIO GUESCINI: I am passionate about driverless technology and I believe that we are gonna have very soon a job and I'm calling that job driverless truck coordinator/assistant.

RAY HARRIPAUL: What will a driverless truck coordinator do?

DARIO GUESCINI: You're working logistics. The truck needs to deliver products from point A to point B. Something might happen due to weather conditions, for example. So we will need someone to take control. There will be potentially be an operations control centre. That person will be monitoring the logistics and ensuring that the truck is going from point A to point B.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: What skills or education will be required for this job?

DARIO GUESCINI: Of course you may need some software-specific knowledge but I don't feel that that's going to be the key. If feel that when we look at skills needed for the job will be good judgment; will be problem solving; critical thinking; and believe it or not, all the human soft skills that are needed to bring that empathy to the question because also you have a client on the other side of the equation. How are you communicating to the client is the truck is not arriving to the destination? So, a little bit of everything.

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SHAWNE McKEOWN: That's a wrap on this episode of *Work Shift*. What did you think?

RAY HARRIPAUL: Want to share your thoughts on work integrated learning? Got an experience or story you want to share about?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Email us at [workshift@georgebrown.ca](mailto:workshift@georgebrown.ca).

RAY HARRIPAUL: Get in touch and we might share your thoughts during our next episode.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: This podcast is brought to you by the fine folks at George Brown College. We want to thank Brien Convery and Dario Guescini for sharing their thoughts with us today.

RAY HARRIPAUL: It's the end of your *Work Shift*. Thanks for listening.

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