LifeSkills

Created with **BARCLAYS**

Diversity and inclusion stories:

Gary
Maths & Physics Student, University of Glasgow

Listen and get inspired by Gary as he talks about his experience of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

First off, tell me about you, what are you doing for your studies and work?

My name is Gary. I'm a first year Maths and Physics student at the University of Glasgow. I'm also a member of the Lifeskills Youth Advisory Council which is formed of a group of young people which help input and steer the LifeSkills programme. This led to my involvement in a Reverse Mentoring programme.

Can you explain what reverse mentoring is for anyone who's not familiar with the term?

Reverse mentoring involves a young person, who is new to the world of work, mentoring someone who is already established in their workplace and so who would be typically older. The benefit being that both people get to open themselves up to the different perspectives and experiences of the other.

So, what made you want to become a reverse mentor?

What initially drew me to the idea was how new it was to me. I was aware of mentoring as a form of introducing a young person to the world of work, but reverse mentoring was a completely new idea to me: what could I teach someone with a successful career? However, when the opportunity comes up to take part in something new and different, you should go for it.

It definitely sounds like a really valuable experience. How did you find it?

To begin with, I wondered what I could possibly bring that would be of use to my mentee. I worried that, as an 18-year-old with little work experience to speak of, my views wouldn't be relevant to someone so experienced.

Those feelings didn't last long. What I quickly realised is that the mentee isn't there because they have to be; they choose to be there because, just like you, they want to learn something. They were very clearly interested in my experiences, which put me at ease.

And what main benefits do you think you got from reverse mentoring, especially with regards to work and employability?

Now, I feel a lot more confident in my experience and qualities that I can bring to a workplace. Having someone in a senior position take my ideas on board was really encouraging. Just because someone is high up in a company, that doesn't mean they know everything. Every young person has something of value to offer a business.

It's also given me the opportunity to grow my network and gain great skills for my CV which will improve my future prospects. And it was also a fun, interesting experience where I was able to have conversations with my mentee and get to know them as a person, rather than as an employer.

What do you think your mentee took away from the experience?

I think what my mentee got most out of our conversations was a better understanding of the perspectives and problems of young people. The world of work that the previous generation entered wasn't the same we're going into, so it's invaluable for employers to be able to better understand and communicate with our generation so that we can learn from one another.

Would you recommend reverse mentoring to other people your age?

It was a really great experience to be involved in reverse mentoring due to my role as a Youth Advisory Council member. I can definitely recommend getting involved in something similar which could help develop your skills.

What piece of advice would give someone interested in getting involved in reverse mentoring?

Keep an eye out for companies offering opportunities and reverse mentoring, or even go one step further: for example, you could go on LinkedIn (or a similar platform) and approach someone in a field you're interested in and you ask them if they're offering any opportunities. There's a chance that even if they aren't, it might be a great way to show interest and impress them by showing how proactive you are. You lose nothing in asking, and at the very least, you'll make a good impression by taking the initiative.

Check out more stories like this by visiting barclayslifeskills.com and searching "Diversity and inclusion stories".