

“Dedication, motivation and a little bit of luck”

Peter Mcnerney talks us through the highs and lows of journalism and how a passion for current affairs and an “inquiring mind” can be the beginning of a lifelong career in this dynamic and rewarding field.

Peter is journalist who has over thirty years of experience in the broadcast media sector. He is currently working as a part-time lecturer at Leeds Beckett university. But let’s start from the beginning.

Back in the 1970’s Peter left his home in Sheffield to start a degree in economics and politics at Warwick university. At the time, there were limited journalism degrees and therefore he found another way to enter the journalism industry. His passion for news drove him towards journalism and it wasn’t long before he began volunteering at the university radio station. While others were out partying, Peter saw his future unfolding and focused on what he was best at, radio. The station was well known nationally and taught him all there was to know about the career which he would go on to thrive in later in life. He reflects that the most important part of university is “to turn up to all the lectures and do what you can.”

By the time he graduated from university in 1980 he knew what he wanted to do and “worked hard at making it happen.” Despite his experience, Peter struggled to find a job in radio and became well acquainted with rejection. So much so, that him and his friends had a “rejection wall” where they would display their many letters of non-acceptance. After a considerable amount of time applying to a number of commercial radio stations, his luck seemed to come and he was offered a yearlong internship at the national broadcasting school, an independent training school in Soho. This taught Peter that nothing comes without “hard work and persistence,” a trait that he took with him through the duration of his career. On reflection, Peter said: “The main struggle is getting into the industry in the first place and staying positive.” Although it was partly luck that saw the acceptance of Peter’s first job, it was also thanks to the expansion in commercial radio that was seen in 1981, freeing up the job market.

After overcoming this first hurdle, he secured a job at Radio Hallam in Sheffield for the following six years which he left to do freelance work. After gaining enough experience in radio, Peter decided to venture into TV where he freelanced at various TV stations for the best part of a year. This was when he decided to move to Calendar News at Yorkshire television for the next 20 years. After taking redundancy, he moved to the Yorkshire post where he worked as their video journalist for the next five years. The highlight of his role there was “meeting so many interesting people and going to interesting places.” He considers this job an extremely memorable one and said that it was the “most pleasant job”

he had throughout his career. He then went on to spend twenty plus years as a news editor and presenter at ITV Calendar South, where he oversaw the news output. This was arguably the pinnacle of his career, where he learnt new skills which he has taken with him into future endeavours.

After years in the industry, Peter has realised that “journalism is an art” and for those considering a career in the profession, Peter thinks that the best advice is: “Try and connect with people. Journalism is all about creating relationships with the public and all you need is to show dedication, motivation and a little bit of luck.”

Peter is currently a part-time lecturer at Leeds Beckett university where he specialises in radio and TV, passing on his years of experience to students. Although his journalism career seems to have come to an end, he is still in touch with the BBC and is considering returning for a few more years of doing what he does best.

Peter's journey in the industry is definitely a memorable one and his years of experience have taught him a great deal. Through the highs and lows of the job he has shown resilience and dedication. He expressed: “You have to work hard to make a difference,” and that's exactly what he did. He believes that in this industry it's all about “making your own luck,” which is the motto he lived by during his career.