



# So your kid wants to be a rock star

Most parents are understandably nervous at this time of year and it's not just because of Schoolies Week, writes **Paddy Hintz**

**A**SK a recruitment adviser what to do if your child tells you they want to be a rock star and they will tell you to talk to a careers counsellor.

Ask a careers counsellor and, if it is Brisbane consultant Yvonne Bent, the advice will come straight from the hip: Don't panic, trust your child, let them explore what they want to do and let them fail but make sure, at the same time, that they are doing something constructive – and always provide a safety net.

As former grade 12 students gear up for the annual rite of passage called Schoolies Week, top of the list of parental objections to a week of unsupervised good times will be the fact that the young school leaver has yet to come up with a suitable career plan.

While university placements may not be offered until January 6, most school leavers by now have some idea of whether or not they can expect to get into the course they want – but not everyone is that organised or motivated.

Bent's advice to those students who still have nothing firmed up beyond a week at the Gold Coast is to start planning.

She advises parents not to panic.

When it comes to career planning, Bent says parents need to take the pressure off kids.

"If you pressure kids, it will get you absolutely nowhere," Bent said. "Parents

have to learn to trust their children. You have to understand your children have certain qualities and give them the opportunity to experience things – but they need to experience things with a safety net.

"With my own children, when I discovered that neither of them wanted to go to university I was horrified but what I said to them was trust yourself – and I trust you.

"I did say to them that they needed to go and do something constructive; something where they had to learn some skills.

"As long as they are doing something constructive – even if it's a fairly basic job or a small course. If they are doing something constructive, it strengthens their self-esteem."

Recruitment consultant Suzie Majer says recruitment agencies can help in that process.

"If year 12 graduates decide they want to enter the workforce full-time, it's worthwhile that they visit a recruitment agency where consultants can not only help them prepare a CV but also help match their strengths and weaknesses to the most appropriate job," she says.

Majer also says those attending university should not discount the value of how paid work can strengthen their resumes.

Majer says school leavers and university students can develop a range of skills working part-time in an office that they

may not develop otherwise – skills such as networking, time management and negotiating office politics.

They would also become more self-confident as they developed those skills.

In the case of 18-year-old Madeleine Swete Kelly, working part-time as an office temp is part of her grand plan to become an architect.

The first-year architecture student and former St Aidens student approached Majer Recruiting to help find her part-time work but the company was so impressed with her they hired her themselves. She proved so capable, the company has deployed her in a range of areas.

Swete Kelly says the experience will help develop the skills she will need to run her own business.

After starting out archiving, Swete Kelly is involved in more complex positions within the organisation. She has become competent in using MYOB to do pays, has experience in timesheet and GST systems and is learning about the economies of running a business.

She enjoys even the most menial of tasks because she says it eventually will help her develop her own business.

"Louis (Majer, the business owner) says it's good to do things like archiving because now I know exactly how long it takes to do that job – or how long it should take."

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Not all school leavers are as motivated as Swete Kelly.

"When my son left school, he told me he wanted to be in a rock band," Bent said. "He got a band together, they got some gigs (and) they practised at home . . . but I said to him that if he wanted to be involved in music he should also go and work somewhere in music.

"He went and got a job in a record store. He became a record company sales rep and then went on to become national sales manager for Sony.

"Both of my children are now doing very well and neither of them went to university."

Bent, a Myers Briggs specialist whose business Teamlab provides career counselling and outplacement services, says the workplace has changed so dramatically in recent times, school leavers need to seek the advice of a consultant in order to plan their careers – and parents need to realise that their own experience is now outdated.

She says it is important for a child to

get away from their parents, get away from their school and go and speak with someone who can look at their personality profile and help them plan their career.

"What kids have got to realise is there is no such thing as a career. They are going to have a number of careers," Bent says.

"I think that kids get stuck on this idea that they've got to make this huge decision all of a sudden. They have trouble with that because there are so many options out there for them.

"That's the whole point. They will have more than one career in their lives.

"I think there is a lot of pressure on kids these days. Things are a lot different nowadays. Times have changed.

"School leavers are going to need to look at jobs almost as if they are contractors. They have to look at where they are and take control of their career by looking at themselves almost as a gun for hire.

"Employers no longer look after you. They only look after you if it suits them.

"Some companies have retention plans and ways of keeping employees but the

chances of someone ending up at a company like that is rare.

"In the real world, most employers are happy to hire you as long as they need you and whatever happens to you after that, well, you'll just have to deal with it." Bent says low unemployment levels mean people are not leaving their jobs and, if they are, they will be going to a better job.

"It's a very challenging time right now for young people," she says.

"The big thing is there is no loyalty any more to employers and employers are no longer loyal to anyone."

Young workers also need to realise that it is OK to fail and that, whatever direction or job they choose, it will not cause any problems for them if they want to change.

"They will have to change anyway one day," she says. They have to learn not to fear the future.

"They have to always be thinking a couple of years ahead so, if they do want to change, they're thinking about what training they need to do in order to move into another area."

**Free advice**

• The Queensland Studies Authority Career Information Service can be contacted on 1800 804 991 or at [www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au](http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au)

• The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, universities, TAFE colleges and Centrelink also offer study and career advice.

• A good starting point is the My Future website, [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au), a joint initiative of the Australian state and territory governments.

• Other information is available from the Australian Association of Career Counsellors: [www.aacc.org.au](http://www.aacc.org.au), Centrelink: [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au), and Jobjuice: [www.jobjuice.gov.au](http://www.jobjuice.gov.au)

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## What now?

### Where to go for help

#### **Career counsellor**

Dr PETER Carey, the national president of the Australian Association of Career Counsellors, says career counsellors work in a variety of situations and come from a range of professional backgrounds.

Consequently, fees charged can vary.

Most private practitioners charge a sessional rate that is a fee for a consultation for a specified length of time. Some use a sliding scale to offer lower fees to people on lower incomes.

Fees can be negotiated by the client but, as a general guide, Carey says a private practitioner will charge around \$120 an hour.

For a six-session package, the amount of time often required for a school leaver, a six-week package rate of around \$600 is often applied.

To find a career counsellor, go to [www.aacc.org.au](http://www.aacc.org.au)

#### **Recruiting company**

JULIE Majer, from Majer Recruitment, says recruiting companies can help some individuals discover where their talents lie or place them into positions where they can build on their skills.

"A recruitment consultant can determine the strengths and weaknesses (of a candidate) through a series of tests and interviews and the end result is usually a job which is fitted to the individual incorporating factors such as corporate culture, job role, salary and staff," she said. Recruitment agencies can help students prepare their CV, get ready for interviews and show them where they can get more information which might help them develop their careers.

#### **Further training**

MARCEL Creed, the chief executive officer of Sarina Russo Schools Australia, says for those not going to university, study options may include upgrading a relevant diploma course to get into a preferred course, vocational education and training courses, diploma-level vocational courses or an apprenticeship. Job network providers can also steer candidates into full-time work.