

the same time becoming the first female head of a Colliers office in the UK. My role is to drive forward our business plan for the region, working with the wider Liverpool team and colleagues across the Northern Powerhouse.

My advice to anyone entering the industry now is to be patient and not to be defeatist. The property industry is always going to be cyclical. There will be new opportunities and, if you are prepared to work hard, gain experience, use your initiative and think outside the box, you may be surprised that starting out in difficult market conditions actually has significant benefits for your future career.



Adewole Ademolake,
BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS
Development manager at Partnerships East London, Countryside Properties

I graduated from the University of Brighton in 2009 with an honours degree in building surveying and, having applied for numerous roles without being offered interviews, it quickly became clear that I may not secure my much-coveted graduate job in property.

As a consequence, I sought roles in other industries, which culminated in a position as a management trainee at Enterprise Rent-A-Car. The experience was instrumental in enhancing my customer service and negotiation skills.

Throughout this period, I remained committed to becoming a property professional. A spontaneous drive to a surveying practice where I deposited my CV led to an eventual internship offer, which in turn compelled me to resign from my full-time job. While the internship did not lead to a permanent position, the experience provided further impetus for more exposure to the property industry.



Jonathan Wright,
BSc (Hons), MRICS,
MCABE, CMApS

Associate in building surveying at Bidwells

When the financial crash happened, I was in the process of applying for the placement required to successfully complete my four-year building surveying degree. The lack of opportunity forced me to expand my job search, eventually landing me a role at my university estates department as a project manager.

When I graduated in 2010, there were even fewer employment opportunities. When endless letters, e-mails and applications yielded nothing, I moved home to undertake a month's unpaid work experience with a surveying firm. This was later extended to three months until the building surveying team no longer existed, but an opportunity in the commercial property team arose – paid work at last,

but not in my chosen field.

Three years on, when the market picked up, I was able to secure my dream role at Bidwells, joining in a more advanced graduate position because of the broadened understanding, knowledge and expertise I had acquired.

Although passing my APC took me two years longer than I would have hoped, this certainly hasn't slowed my career path; eight years after graduating I won the building surveying category of the RICS Young Surveyor of the Year Awards.

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I enrolled on to a master’s in real estate development and investment but deferred it halfway as I was successful in securing a role at GSK as a territory manager. This role only lasted seven months, after which I resumed my master’s at the University of Greenwich and was awarded a distinction.

On completion, I finally secured my big break at a housing association and grew to become a development manager. Fast-forward a few years and, after stints in the public sector working on development projects, I am now a chartered planning and development surveyor working for a national housebuilder on a large regeneration project.

My route into property wasn’t easy, and for those facing uncertainty today, it is important to stay focused on your goals – even if it means taking a slightly different path. Property is a broad industry which involves a world far beyond consultancies. Consider applying for entry roles with housing associations, councils and housebuilders, where you will gain valuable experience. Most importantly, forming relationships via mediums such as LinkedIn and volunteering can also go a long way to boosting your credentials.

**Mark McKay,
BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS
Senior surveyor at a national
infrastructure provider**

I graduated from university in 2008, obtaining a bachelor’s degree in geography with a focus on planning and regeneration. I soon realised that the financial crisis had created

an unfavourable job market for the newly graduated as opportunities either disappeared or became severely limited. This increased competition among graduates, and those with more experience naturally went to the top of the pecking order. Having had little experience, I had to make myself stand out.

I sought short-term work experience at a planning firm and then with two different real estate firms – a large multinational firm and a regional firm. I enjoyed the experience I gained, especially going out on site as well as spending time in an office, which then spurred me on to apply for a higher education degree in real estate and commercial property.

By the time I had completed my real estate and commercial property degree and completed three work experience placements, the market had begun to turn again. I managed to secure a graduate role in a local authority estates department which had a very attractive APC programme and offered support to become chartered. It was a brilliant role which allowed me to get involved in all aspects of real estate from day one. I have no doubt that if it wasn’t for the challenging market when I first graduated, I would not have followed the real estate and surveying route. It became a blessing in disguise.

Current graduates should keep applying for various roles in the real estate industry and take great care to ensure that CVs are specifically tailored for each role applied for rather than using a template. Should opportunities become limited due to the possible effects of Covid-19, actively seek out work experience and consider pursuing further education that is directly related to the real estate industry and/or other professional qualifications to bolster your CV.

During challenging market conditions, it is easy to become deflated. However, if you look in the right places, there will always be opportunities. My advice is to be proactive, persevere and you will get that all important “foot in the door”.

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My project management placement honed my time management and delegation skills, launching a real passion for delivering projects, while the first graduate role extended my commercial awareness around landlord and tenant work, which fuelled my interest in dilapidations; these are two of the core disciplines that I now focus on.

For anyone graduating this year, I would say: no experience is bad experience, so do what you can to get a role somewhere in the industry and, if not, try for work experience to bolster your CV. Make yourself useful and become an asset, as you never know what one opportunity could lead to next.

Our industry is one of those most affected by recessions and, therefore, to be successful you will have to become accustomed to working through them. While this may slow down your career progression in the short term, there will always be opportunities to catch up.

