

Essay runner up**Name:** Adrian Walerowski**Studying:** Human Resource Management at Aston University

Did you know that the average UK Citizen spends 58% of their life as an employee? Now, if we subtract the first 10 years of a person's childhood, that figure becomes 72%, and it is still rising.

But enough numbers. Let me tell you a story.

My mum is a lovely lady. Loves good books, sweet wine and gardening. She is easily the strongest person I know. She actually managed to put up with me for a medal-worthy 20 years. Anyway, she spends a minimum of 40 hours per week at work. Usually it's closer to 50, considering over-time hours. She works as a factory operative in a food produce plant? - Which is a fancy way of saying putting pieces of chicken into packaging.

Every night, she would return from work exhausted, and I would pour a cup of tea, hot or iced, depending on the season, and just let her tell me how the day went. Those sessions made me an expert on assembly line operations, the impacts of seasonal demand on the workforce, and team-leader Stacey's unbearable glass-shattering voice.

Through those conversations, I finally realized why she did it. All those hours. All those days. All those years spent at work. She did it for me. She did it so that I could do what I wanted.

So questions surfaced. What do I want to do? Who do I want to be? What degree should I choose? After lots of pondering, diary writing, and conversations with teachers who cared, I sagaciously decided to ignore all sound advice and pursue my dream career...

Human Resource Management.

Don't go yet! If you can survive until the end, you can reward yourself with a cookie or five.

(In HRM we call that extrinsic motivation.)

I chose to study Human Resource Management because there are hundreds of thousands of people in this world - just like my mum. Toiling tirelessly for those they love - just like my mum. Spending the majority of their life at work - just like my mum. These people truly are the unsung heroes of our world. My goal is to make

their lives at work easier, happier, and more enjoyable. Studying HRM lets me do that.

Aston University's course in HRM has given me the opportunity to pursue this goal. Every day, I am around world-class researchers who are making consistent progress. Inch by inch, we learn what makes people tick, what makes them productive, and what makes them happy. When I am not studying, I spend time with amazing people who I am proud to call my friends. I have been exposed to things that have never crossed my mind before (like pole dancing, business competitions, a paid trip to Barcelona with two friends, martial arts classes and... things best left unsaid.)

Yes, the workload is bigger. Yes, you need self-discipline. But my year at university has easily been the best year of my life.

Oh, and remember my mum's job I'm from a low-income background. Yet I got the chance to pursue my dream. So don't buy the lie. This is not just for the chosen ones. This is for people like you and me. For everyone.

Never in history has it been easier to get a world-class education. Never in history have governmental support systems been so strong. These places exist to help you pursue your chosen career. Not just to broaden, but to explode your horizons. To do something worth getting out of bed for. The privilege of pursuing my dream would not be possible without higher education. I have my shot at making a mark in the world.