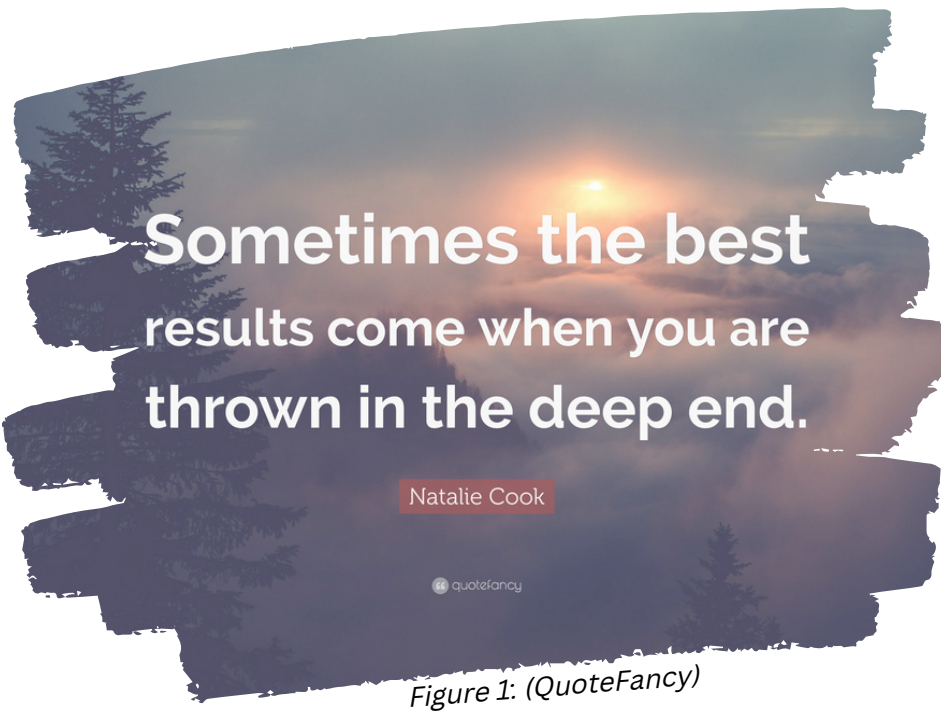


SINK OR SWIM

A WORK PLACEMENT CHALLENGE

Have you ever experienced the dreaded moment an employer throws you in the deep end? The panic kicks in and survival mode is activated. Feeling overwhelmed is normal but it is how you deal with the extra pressure that will determine whether you sink or swim. I am going to reflect on a time during my placement as a Trainee Assistant Director on 'World on Fire' Season 2 where I had to step up and take on extra responsibility at very short notice.



Sometimes the best results come when you are thrown in the deep end.

Natalie Cook

quote fancy

Figure 1: (QuoteFancy)

Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice

To reflect on my experience, I will be using Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice to evaluate the challenges I faced on my placement and discuss how I have learnt from them and how I can put this into practice in the future. 'David Kolb's learning cycle allows you to structure a piece of reflective writing around four distinct stages' (Reflective writing: Kolb). The 4 stages are presented in Figure 2.

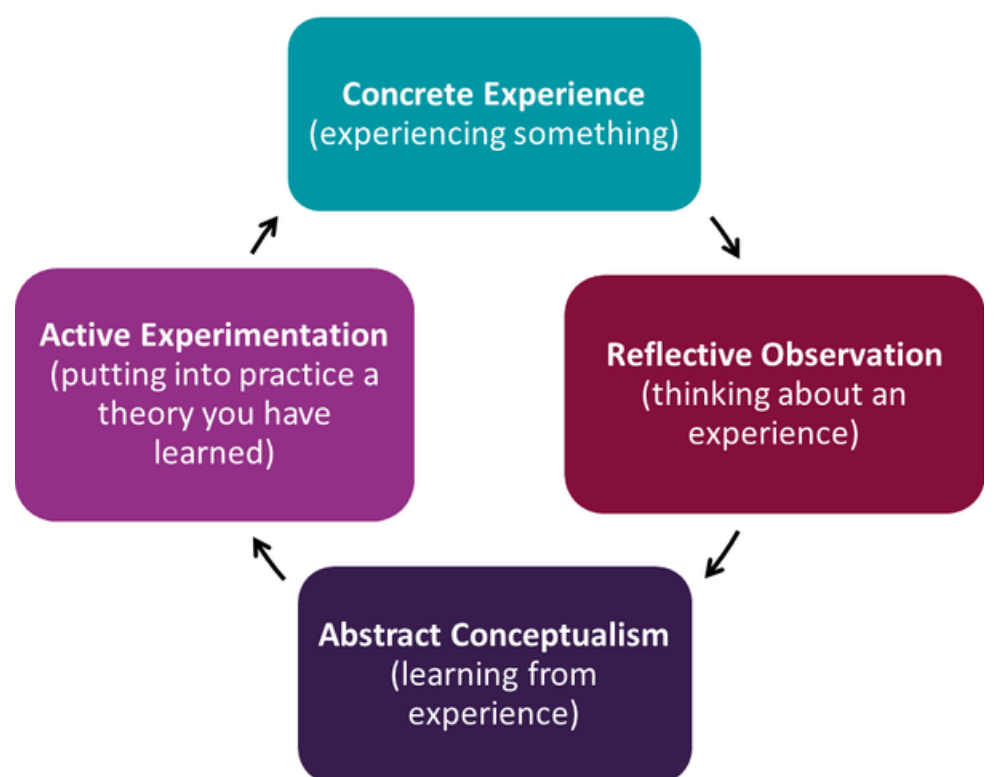


Figure 2: (Reflective Writing: Kolb)

Concrete Experience

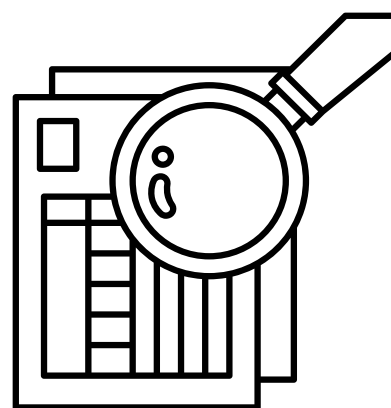
Being a trainee means you are on hand to help your department in any situation. This may mean stepping in to fill someone else's shoes in their absence. On the 2nd last week of the shoot, I had an early pre-call to get cast ready. After the first cast member arrived and I got them into hair and make-up, I got a call from the Crowd 2nd Assistant Director to say she was running late, and she asked if I could manage the extras and get them ready. This challenged me to take on more responsibility at short notice and work hard to make sure the day ran smoothly.

I felt incredibly stressed initially after receiving the phone call. I had 5 cast members to get ready and I had to oversee thirty extras arriving and getting ready. It seemed like a lot for one person, and I remember doubtful thoughts started to shadow my mind and I felt like I had been abandoned or set up to fail. I had to snap out of it quickly and get on with the job because the entire plan for the shoot day was riding on the on-screen talent being ready on time. It was hard to get past those initial thoughts, but adrenaline and panic turned into empowerment to prove myself to my team and I used this energy to do the job.

"CHALLENGE YOURSELF, JUMP OFF THE DEEP END AND LEARN TO SWIM."

Carson Kressley

Reflective Observation



Looking back, I think I was able to look past the negative thoughts because I was given all the information, I needed to complete the job. My team emailed me the extras list and their on-set time so that I could account for everyone arriving and keep track of their progress. The short distance from the unit base to crowd holding worked well as I was able to run back and forth between main cast and extras although it was exhausting. One thing that could have made this experience a failure was the fact there were no other Assistant Directors on location at the time to jump in and save me if I lost control of the situation.

This shaped the experience a lot because there was no other option other than doing it successfully. I viewed this as a training opportunity. We were coming to the end of a 10 week shoot and my skills and experience were being put to the test to see if I gained confidence and was observant of other members in my team and what their role involved.



Figure 3: (NY Times)

Abstract Conceptualism

Although I was stressed, I was finally able to push the negative thoughts to the side so that I could do the job and do it well. I believe it was down to the expression 'fake it till you make it' in which 'a person imitates the confidence or skills they need to succeed in what they are doing in the hopes that they will eventually feel real' (Barnes). I tend to employ this frame of mind when I feel intimidated about a situation, but I know I need to get on with it. I knew deep down that I needed people to trust me and listen to my direction to get all extras through the works on time and I couldn't achieve this while feeling out of my depth and inadequate. Although this mindset doesn't always work, I feel it did in this situation and on reflection, I found this an overwhelmingly positive experience. It was an opportunity for growth and responsibility, and I was able to prove myself and my skills to my team and I increased my chances of future employment.

"BE AROUND PEOPLE WHO
PUSH YOU TO BE MORE."

Wesam Fawzi

Active Experimentation

When a situation like this one arises in the future, I would like to feel prepared to take on new responsibilities without having to employ the 'fake it till you make it' mindset. I want to try to ask my team more questions and observe other people's roles so that I can step in for emergencies and feel that I am equipped to do the job. As I am still a trainee, I would want to ensure that I can identify a support system to draw on in case something goes wrong, or I just simply need a hand. This would help me feel more relaxed in the role, have real confidence, and approach the situation with more belief and composure.



Figure 4: (Freepik)

Conclusion

I knew the flexibility required of me when I stepped into the role. I proved I was the right person for the job and have the right attitude for the film and television industry as you always need to be willing to step in and help where needed. 'A sink or swim approach to a new job will give you the right mindset and a prompt to thrive in today's competitive environment' (Flexible Working Works). I may not always have agreed with this statement, but I now believe that this method can help you flourish in the workplace.

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