

My journey from LSE student to global entrepreneur



If you're reading this, chances are you're probably like me – thinking about (or already) studying a graduate business programme at LSE. Sure, we come from all over the world in different shapes, sizes, races, and genders, but if I had to guess, I'd wager we all share something in common.

I'd be willing to bet we all carry some part of that Type A genome. That pesky and annoying voice that drives all of us toward goals and milestones and turns our inboxes and calendars into a rainbow of coordinated activity. That nagging feeling we have to cross things off our lists and the driving force that motivates us to move on to the next life goal.

With completing grad school and starting a company high on my "life to-do list," 2016 was earmarked as one of those milestone years for me. I had completed the LSE in the **Global Master's in Management**, and it became clear that my two years in the programme were just the beginning of my involvement and lifelong learning experience. LSE continues to weave itself into the fabric of my new company and what I do on a daily basis.

After graduating from LSE in summer 2016, I launched a startup company in partnership with my brother. In our first year of existence, we've done some things right, made some mistakes, and learned a lot throughout the growing process. In this blog I wanted to share the most valuable things I've learned along the way, and how LSE and others played instrumental roles in our early beginnings.

It Takes A Village

Our company, **RootNote**, is building a community to empower musicians. By helping to build, support, and invest into musician-owned companies, we are putting the content creators of the world at the forefront of their careers. Rooted in Nashville and extending globally, our growing network of innovative thinkers is charging ahead, working in fields ranging from academia and songwriting to tech and big business, and everything in between. And just as we have recognised

how important this community is to creatives, we're finding a supportive backbone is equally important to startups (like us).

We've found tremendous help and guidance through the **Generate** programme at LSE, which supports students setting up entrepreneurial ventures, and through the **Nashville Entrepreneur Center** in our home city. While they certainly won't do the work for you, they can and have made the journey much more manageable. Without the resources, grant funding, working space, networking and collaboration opportunities (and countless mentor meetings), I can confidently say we would not be in the same place as we are today. While this might sound self-aggrandising, I promise you it's not. It's a testament to organisations such as LSE Generate and the Nashville EC who put countless amounts of time, effort, and resources into supporting entrepreneurs. Building organisations, starting movements, or doing whatever you do to make the world a better place can be lonely. Don't be afraid to reach out, ask for help, and find your village. We did and are better for it.

Take Advantage of the Hidden Opportunities

Life in London is great, without a doubt. Studying at the heart of it provides you with proximity to world influencers in government, business, and just about every other area of life. Take advantage of that. But also take advantage of the opportunities and connections you will make in the classroom and outside of London. Whether it's philosophically exploring Einstein's theories of relativity, taking courses that require you to consult with companies and NGOs in other parts of the world, going to the multitude of graduate conferences across Europe, or couch surfing across new continents by staying with your classmate's friends and family – look for the unique, perspective altering opportunities.

Thinking back on my own experiences, I believe some of the hidden opportunities had the greatest impact on my growth as a person and played the most formative roles in the genesis of our company. Don't get me wrong – the more tangible opportunities are great. But don't forget to think outside the box in your quest for understanding.

Graduation Is Just the Beginning

Graduation is odd. I mean, it fits perfectly with our Type A desires to accomplish, get recognised, and move on, but it's a little bittersweet. The pageantry and celebration is nice, but as we were preparing to make our way into the world again to conquer the next challenge, I found myself wondering why I should be completely starting over again. After all, we did spend the past two years of our lives creating opportunities and building a community. Why should we give up that momentum?

To me, the simple answer is that we shouldn't. And as an LSE alumnus and company co-founder, we're making it a priority to continue looking for new ways to engage and work with LSE. Since graduation (and in our first year of existence), RootNote has completed a business project with some incredible students in the next cohort of the Global Master's in Management programme, joined LSE Generate on a networking trek to San Francisco, and will be presenting research that I conducted as part of my LSE dissertation project this September in Vienna, Austria at the International Music Business Research Association's annual conference.

These are some of the things I believe we're doing right. (Unfortunately, our word count limit prohibited us from talking about the things we've done wrong). Bottom line, graduation really is just the beginning and I'm finding I'm just as connected as an alumnus half way across the world as I was on Houghton Street.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jason Burchard is a Co-founder at RootNote. Prior to co-founding RootNote, Jason worked as a Fellow at Mustard Seed, a seed stage venture capital firm in London, and as a senior consultant at a Texas-based consultancy. Jason's love of travel and music has taken him across the globe and, finally, to Nashville where he and his brother, Jeremy, have joined forces to support a growing number of incredibly talented musicians. You'll likely find him at a local music venue or out and about, training for his first full Ironman.

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