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New arrivals

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The Parlour game

If Jason Parlour followed the standard career advice he would be ill-prepared to be running the UK's biggest network of complimentary therapists. As **Alan Bunce** found, at the age of 27, Jason had simply gained so much experience of the workplace, the ideal career found him.

A DEGREE in engineering may be an unusual qualification for a career in complimentary therapy, but Jason Parlour rarely seeks the conventional path.

Jason, 27, a former Maiden Erlegh student, has done more full-time, part-time, temporary, permanent, paid and unpaid jobs than many people could manage in two or three lifetimes.

As well as doing more than 20 wildly different jobs, he turned a hobby in complimentary treatment into a nationwide business with plans to expand.

For years he jumped between jobs, before, during and after his degree at Cardiff University, while also working as a therapist.

Then four years ago his experience of things like selling, advising and teaching, combined with knowledge of engineering convinced him it was time to run a business himself.

Parlour Ltd was initially a web design agency but Jason found the only thing missing was his therapy hobby. So he brought that in too, a division known as The Therapy Agency, which has

engineering procedures.

He said: "My degree was not necessarily about how to use a hammer or a saw, it's about managing engineering systems. I'm transferring that to business. We were taught to be very logical in our approach to things."

Therapy, he said, needed a similarly open mind.

"For me the therapy is about going outside the problem and looking in from the outside.

"The symptom is not always the cause of a problem, it's often in a completely different place."

But having run out of money after six months he went off to become a recruitment consultant to save up some more, a job that ended once he began offering business advice over and above his role.

Once he returned to the business he boosted its presence on the internet and gathered 200 therapists, working for firms and individuals around the country.

He is due to go live with search facilities and online booking this week. Therapy vouchers are in the pipeline.

But with plans to have over 1,000 therapists by the end of next year, he is going through a process of tightening the criteria for membership. So far around 60 are now fully accredited.

Jason, a non-smoker and non-drinker, says if he could offer advice to others starting off their careers it would be to start with their dreams, then work out how to get there.

"One of the reasons I have done so many things is I like to make the most of what's available. It's very much about making use of the opportunities available and then going from there."

Going into business though, carries an extra warning.

Jason said: "No matter how hard you think it is going to be, it is always much harder. It is easy to have an idea but harder to turn it into a real business."

"But with the experience I have got behind me I have seen the way to do things and the way not to do things."

One of the ways not to do things was to suffer a suspected broken foot while absailing in New Zealand during a year out before university.

The outcome, however, was that he used the Japanese healing system called Reiki and his foot healed in four days instead of the six to eight weeks he had been told to expect.

Mistake, he said, were extremely useful. One of the many thoughts he remembers from inspirational books, backs up his theory.

He said: "One guy who had made a successful business said he was asked if there was anything he would do differently. He said he would make all the same mistakes but he would make them earlier."

"It's that childlike questioning of everything rather than just accepting things as they are."

One of his aims now is to increase the acceptance of therapy. He added: "My aim is to help everybody find time for themselves, whatever they do, wherever they are."

■ Contact 0845 458 1977
■ Link www.therapy-agency.co.uk



Therapeutic occupation: One of the agency's therapist Samantha Thirty-Brooks treating Liz Parsons at the Spencer Group in King's Road.



Career wise: Jason Parlour. 041023a

taken over the majority of his work.

He has no doubts that his nomadic working life, which has taken him through jobs selling heritage pictures door-to-door, being a conference receptionist, recruitment consultant and house cleaner, has given him the know how and confidence to run a business.

And like his career, The Therapy Agency - a network of complimentary therapists offering treatments from their own clinics throughout the UK - has developed at speed. It offers many varied treatments but specialises in workplace massage and is the only agency of its kind to span the country.

While most of his jobs, from counselling students at Cardiff University to barman, involve contact with others, Jason says as a therapist/businessman he also relies heavily on his training in engineering.

The methodical business approach he believes has parallels with

The Curriculum Vitae

Since leaving school his CV so far lists:

- Business trainer
- Promotions assistant
- Charity entertainer
- Door to door salesman
- College lecturer
- Receptionist
- Silver service waiter
- Student warden
- Club and pub barman
- Doorman & bar security
- Catering assistant
- Domestic cleaner
- Handyman
- Kitchen fitter's assistant
- Plasterer's mate
- Painter & decorator
- Outdoor pursuits assistant instructor
- Web designer
- Computer trainer
- Database developer/programmer
- Recruitment consultant
- Local Coordinator of Cardiff University Nightline (later becoming the National Coordinator (voluntary helpline service).

There are hobbies on top, of course, and he trained to fly with the RAF.

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