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Raam Thakrar

2.1, BSocSco International Studies with Politics (1998)

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Who are you currently working for and what is your job title?

Co-Founder, Touchnote

How has your career developed since graduating from the University of Birmingham?

A lot. I've been a teacher, worked at the UN / World Bank / EU. I've worked in strategy consulting, for people like Procter & Gamble. I did a Masters at LSE in Development Studies. I've worked in development consulting (for USAID). I've worked in small business finance (EBRD). And now I've been an entrepreneur for 5 years.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

The diversity of the role – I do many different things on a daily basis, and almost all of them stretch me hugely. And the fact that I'm making it up as I go along. And in tech, that's really normal.

Why did you originally apply to Birmingham?

It's a well recognised university, not too far from home. In all honesty, I probably didn't do enough research into the university, given how important the choice was.

What are your fondest memories of the University?

I made some very good friends. And it was unquestionably the most interesting academic time of my life – more so than my masters.

How did you grow as a person by coming to University?

Hugely. It undoubtedly helped me form career ideas. And helped me develop my intellectual passions in ways that even today make me smile.

What did you think of the learning experience within the University?

Almost all of it. My South African studies and Politics of Islam are still courses I reference in conversations today. The various IR (international relations) and IPE (international political economy) classes have helped formed my view of the world.

Did you find the degree programme at Birmingham challenging or easy?

It was very challenging. But it wasn't difficult. That was the fun of working on stuff that I found hugely interesting.

Did you find the University or your degree helpful to you in getting your first job?

The careers centre didn't help much, but given that I was off to do a few placements and masters, I wasn't really expecting much. My POLSIS tutors has helped over the years – and that's been invaluable.

What advice would you give to current students studying on your degree programme?

Really think through what you want to do – and where career choice overlaps with intellectual interest and skills. And importantly the amount of money you want to earn. I don't really remember if someone tried to teach me this @ Birmingham – but it's taken me many years to realise this.

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