



## Transcript: Amanda - employer attitudes to the PhD

What, generally working in this environment, do you think the attitude is to people with PhDs?

Mmm yeah. I mean I don't think in London in the UK, sort of as much as I've worked here, I don't think people would know I had a PhD and I wouldn't expect them to judge me any differently for it. I would say when I've worked abroad, however, because you tend to hand out cards more and I would on my card be called doctor (.....) I would say abroad it almost counts for more because some cultures are a little bit more traditional. So therefore they're a bit more hierarchically-based and they perhaps have just a higher awareness and respect for PhDs, probably in the rest of Europe. So whilst I think it's quite a good thing, [I prefer the attitude] back here [in the UK] because I think we're not hierarchically trapped and we don't give due deference and feel that you're inferior or superior to PhDs; I think that's a very positive thing because essentially here you're judged on how well you do your job. You're not judged on what grades you got in your degree because that doesn't matter and you're very much judged on what you're doing so it just doesn't matter. Now the fact is it helps me a lot so for me it's a skill I have that I'm able to bring to the work I have to do, so when I'm in difficult meetings I have a sort of good basis of experience of thinking through very complex issues, or analysing something, or looking at it from different viewpoints. Of working in a foreign language, looking at texts in foreign languages and doing the same thing. So it helps me no end but I don't think it affects – and certainly not in London – how other people see me. I don't think people would know I have one unless they know me personally and happen to know that that's something I've done. And I think that's how it should be. But it probably makes a good impression abroad and perhaps has had the most impact, just from a perception point of view, abroad.

Do many of your colleagues have PhDs?

I mean I don't know for that reason because you wouldn't normally, you wouldn't naturally know. I would guess it's not massively common but I would guess there are a few around.

And what do you think your employers' attitude might be to recruiting people with PhDs?

I think it was positive at the time, at the boards. It was very positive. People were interested in the subject that I'd studied and perhaps also because it was quite contemporary, that gave it an extra relevance in terms of the job I was coming to do. But I don't think that was exclusively the case, you know but it just happened to make it even more fitting the fact that it was modern Germany and a modern political event if you like that was at the centre of what I'd studied. And I think that yeah, they were very positive. I am aware that in recruitment at the Foreign Office they are very encouraging. They actively encourage people to have done something before they apply having left university. Because of the depth of the issues, the seriousness, the sensitivity of the issues there's a certain sort of maturity I think in dealing with some of those issues that they like people who've done something else and bring in a skill from outside the office. Now we have obviously people who've come in who've been lawyers, who've done a completely different career and very much having done a PhD was respected as a good thing to have done before joining so I felt it was something that I offered the office and they were, you know, they noticed. This isn't an institutional – public sector isn't going to pay you loads for having a PhD, but it's not going to pay you loads for having been a lawyer either. So I think it was looked at very positively and it did give me that extra period of having lived abroad and more having just been a bit older which is relevant because a lot of our work and the situations you're in you can't plan for. They crop up and you have to sort of respond within meetings, within negotiations, take opportunities or you know if arguments break out you have to try and be a bit creative. You have to just sort of stand back and be a bit logical or say well we're not going to get anywhere, let's not go down this line anymore and those are just skills of you know, a bit of experience. You know the more you do this job you gain experience, but also I think it helps just to be perhaps a bit older, to have seen more things, to just be a bit more aware of the world.

Is the PhD something for you that's located in the past now or does it still have some value for you?

Oh very much yeah, very much. It's in the past but therefore it's part of me so no it's a choice I made to do it, to commit that period of years to doing it and I have no regrets about doing that and it's absolutely important. It was an important choice of the next period of time doing that so no I've no regrets about that.

And it doesn't clash with your professional identity now?

No, not at all. Not at all. Complements only.