

Harry Smith

Skill: Graphic Design



From: West Sussex
Competed in: WorldSkills 2007, Shizuoka
Employer: Arts Institute Bournemouth & Chichester College
Result: Silver

Qualifications

- 9 GSCE's
- C&G Communications Level 2 (City & Guilds)
- 3 A Levels- Double AVCE in IT and Art
- Advance Modern Apprentice for Hospitality Supervision
- National Diploma in Graphic Design, Chichester College
- Arts Institution Bournemouth – BAHons, Graphic Design, to be completed in 2009

Twenty-two year old student, Harry Smith, was the first UK Graphic Design competitor to compete at a WorldSkills competition and he did the country proud, winning the silver medal. But as Harry will tell you himself, the process from student to WorldSkills winner didn't happen overnight.

How did Harry get started in Graphic Design?

Well, Harry first dabbled in Graphic Design as a GSCE student. After sitting his A-Levels and then enjoying a year out he decided that Graphic Design was the career for him. He joined Chichester College to study for his National Diploma in Graphic Design, and it was here that Harry learnt about competing. After speaking to his teacher he entered his first competition and promptly won the Gold award... but it took another 18 months of tough competition at national events before Harry was told he had been selected for Team UK.

So how do you train for WorldSkills?

Training took Harry all over the country and even to Canada, where he competed in their national finals. He spent four months travelling everywhere from Edinburgh to London. He spent time with construction firms, in house departments, branding agencies and even a toy manufacturer, he even camped at his Training Manager's house to make sure he could get to his work placements in time. Harry says: "The most important thing was to learn how to do my job within all sorts of industries, even ones which I didn't know much about or thought could be boring, because you never know what you'll be tested on in competitions."

"For my last training session I had a desk in the foyer of my college for two days. I had to work there on my own while students kept walking past, so that I could get used to spectators watching what I was doing."

What was it like going to Japan?

Japan was unlike anywhere Harry had been before. "The language was the biggest barrier, we'd tried sushi before we left the UK so that part was ok!" So apart from the food, what was it actually like competing? "Competing was really good fun but obviously very daunting. One of the hardest things was the tiredness. I thought I'd be fine as my competition basically involved sitting in front of a computer all day. But I was wrong. We were up at 5.30 each morning and didn't get to bed until 10.30 in the evening. By the fourth day I couldn't wait for it to finish, I was so tired!"

But what about the competition itself, how did that go?

For the Graphic Design competition there were four projects, one each day. One of the interesting things is the way projects are marked. It is split into 'objective marks', in other words, the technical detail, which can only be right or wrong and 'subjective marks' which are based on the judges personal take on what your work is like. "It meant you couldn't tell how well you'd done and there was a lot of stiff competition in my category."

And the results?

Harry stormed ahead of his competition, finishing in second place and winning the silver medal. In fact, he was only three points behind the gold medal winner, an incredible achievement for the first UK Graphic Design competitor.

“Waiting for the results was the worst part – the Graphic Design competition was skill number 40, so we waited quite a while before they reached us. I felt really sick by then, especially since I knew that my team mates had got some great medal places, but when my name was read out it was fantastic. After the ceremony I quickly worked out how to call home and gave mum and dad the news, they were really excited.”

So how does it feel to come back a medal winner?

Well Harry's family and friends certainly wanted to celebrate his success, and on arriving back to the UK Harry was thrown a surprise party. "I thought it was odd when mum asked me to put on my medal before we got through the front door, but as soon as I walked in I knew why!" Competing has also had a very positive effect on Harry.

"Since WorldSkills I have much more confidence in my own ability. The main difference will be when I've finished my degree and am looking for a job. Just taking part in WorldSkills gives me an edge over others and will certainly be something I can talk about

in interviews. I think this will become even more important when WorldSkills comes to London in 2011 and more people know about it."

So where does Harry go from here?

Well, since returning, Harry has decided that he certainly wants to stay involved with WorldSkills. He will be a judge for the UK national Graphic Design competition, he is applying to become an Assistant Training Manager for WorldSkills Calgary 2009 and has also been back to old college, Chichester, to lecture students on technical graphics to help them as they apply to enter the national competitions. All while still studying for his degree.

So what does Harry have to say to others wanting to take part?

"Do it. It takes a lot of commitment, drive and determination but it is so worth it. Even if you don't win a medal the taking part of something like WorldSkills is so amazing and worthwhile."

A word with Sarah Stannard, Vice Principal at Chichester College

Chichester College has been involved in competitions for many years now. They firmly believe in the opportunities it gives students and on average 50 students take part in competitions every year. Sarah is excited at the prospect that some could even be part of WorldSkills London 2011 when it hosted in the UK.

So is the training hard work?

There is a lot of training involved to ensure that the competitor is ready for WorldSkills and this needs to be managed carefully. Harry was at university when he was in the UK team and had to juggle his course and his training which can be difficult."

Does competing benefit the competitor?

The answer is yes. "Harry's always had great design talent, which the training has polished and enhanced. He has also gained confidence in talking to all types of people and in presenting, which will help him throughout his working life."

And what about the benefits for the College? Sarah thinks that there are many.

“For us it helps motivate students and show them what they could achieve. Teaching staff are also motivated by helping their students succeed. The whole college enjoys seeing students be successful.”



For more information, please contact the PR Team, UK Skills: 020 7612 9260