

THE SWITCH

From marketing to bartending

When Luke Ashton completed his commerce degree, he knew where he was going to take his skills.

"I'd done a marketing specialisation and was very interested in it at the time," he says.

Ashton started out as a sponsorship manager with a company running business events but ended up as a senior accounts manager with an outdoor media supplier in Melbourne.

"I'd spend my day creating proposals and generating ideas for various clients like [National Australia Bank] and Jetstar and pitching to their media buyer," he says. "The buyer would then sell it on to their client."

Ashton's speciality was billboards. "If a client was launching a new car, we'd analyse who the campaign would be aimed at, tailoring a solution that would have high impact," he says.

But acting as a middleman eventually lost its appeal.

"Ninety per cent of the time I didn't have a direct relationship with the client. I was mostly dealing with media buyers who had to filter out ideas, so it was difficult to hold their attention," he says.

Eventually, Ashton realised he needed a change.

"I felt less and less motivation to get up in the morning, put on a suit and sell solutions," he says.

But walking away also meant leaving behind perks. "A large portion of my time was spent entertaining clients; there were lots of lunches and socialising."

Ashton decided to move back to Sydney and dip his toe into something he'd left behind after his uni days – bartending. After a short stint working for a bartending

industry magazine, he realised what he really enjoyed was getting behind the bar and making drinks.

"I chatted to people to find out where the busiest bars are," he says. "I'm now managing the bar at the Duke Bistro, in Darlinghurst."

Ashton has found bartending has changed since his uni days.

"It's definitely a much more professional industry now than when I left, with many more professional bartenders forging careers for themselves locally and internationally," he says.

There are also plenty of opportunities to hone his own skills. Ashton recently won the Stoli Original Bartender competition and works with foodie friends on the popular TOYS Collective, which runs one-off themed degustation dinners.

As a bar manager, Ashton now enjoys the creativity and client contact he felt was lacking in his former career.

"I can create my own cocktail list and express myself through the flavours, textures and combinations," he says.

"I'm also able to build relationships with suppliers."

With a 3pm start and a knock-off time between midnight and 2am, the late hours suit this night owl.

"Mornings are not my favourite time of day," he says. "It was always a struggle to iron a shirt and head off at 8am."

Nonetheless, life behind the bar can be demanding.

"It can be very hard work but it's all in trying to make it look easy," he says. "It's quite physical but irrespective of how hard it is, it ends. It's satisfying to sit down with the team at the end of the night and have a debrief and a beer."

SUE WHITE



THEN

NOW

SALARY About \$100,000.
WORK-LIFE BALANCE "It was a lot more stressful before. I'm working evenings now and I'm more suited to that."
HOURS 45-50 hours a week.



Shaking things up ... Luke Ashton left his marketing job (above) to pursue a career in bartending. He is now bar manager at Duke Bistro (top).

SALARY About \$80,000, with tips.
WORK-LIFE BALANCE "Much better. I get to enjoy life more now, I'm the happiest and most content I've ever been."
HOURS 55-60 hours a week, with Sunday and Monday off.
MISS "I don't get to spend as much time with my friends in nine-to-five jobs. I also miss entertaining clients for lunch. Lunch on the company was always nice!"
CHALLENGES "Sometimes the late hours and relentlessness [of the role] can be grinding but you've always got to be welcoming and smiling."

LINKS
dukebistro.com.au

MyCareer.com.au

For salary advice, see mycareer.com.au/salary-centre.