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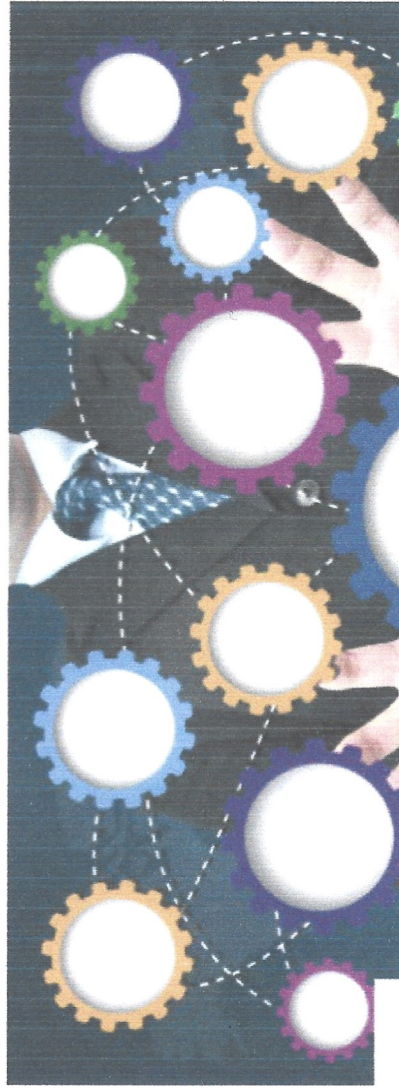
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Chicago Operations Analyst Gives Pros and Cons For Entrepreneurial Work

January 26, 2015 2:00 AM

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Accounting, microeconomics and statistics courses are done and dusted. The business degree is personalized for each new graduate and yearned for by aspiring students. But what happens after that is an independent decision.



Photo Courtesy of Nicole Knox

Choices of gaining real-world experience in the business world include internships, entrepreneurial projects with a staff, working in corporate America or going at it alone as an entrepreneur. Chicago businesswoman Nicole Knox chose to test out the waters in both worlds.

Knox earned a bachelor's degree in 2003 and a master's degree in 2007 for Business Administration with accounting from DeVry and Keller. She spent the bulk of her career as a finance coordinator with PwC before deciding to focus on an independent career as a contractor.

"When I first was in corporate, I found a lot of my validation and value from the job title that I had, the amount of money that I made and from the things that I was able to accomplish," said Knox. "However, I loved when [my business] was my own. Nobody gave it to me. Nobody could take it away. If I don't ever get another full-time job again, I'm okay with that because I know that I can

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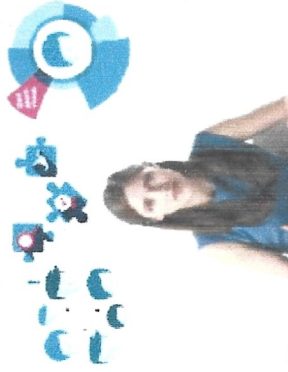
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away. If I don't ever get another full-time job again, I'm okay with that because I know that I can feed my family."

Knox is now an adjunct professor and a senior operations analyst. And while a math whiz or business savvy person may be able to do certain tasks without a degree, Knox thinks having someone in a business owner's team should always have traditional education.

"The M.B.A. gives you more practical [experience]. The fundamentals of business — how to set up your accounting books, what you need to do to protect yourself legally, how to set up an operational infrastructure, how to write a marketing plan — those require a very specific skill set taught in school."

Knox recalls enjoying math as early as the age of six, when she said she balanced her mother's checkbook. But understanding people in psychology courses is what she emphasizes more.

"Leaders need to understand how to motivate workers. If you don't understand why some people have the behaviors that they have or if you don't understand psychology from the perspective of a mix of people that you're likely to have in your organization, you will have a hard time boosting morale. All of that is important when you're running an organization."

Shamontie L. Vaughn is a professional journalist who has work featured in AXS, Yahoo!, Chicago Defender and Chicago Tribune. She's been an Examiner since 2009 and currently writes about 10 categories on Examiner.com.

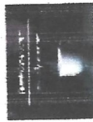
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