

My Brilliant Career

How death of an internet cafe gave birth to a business

Jake Willis is the CEO of Lulaway, a company that helps young people find work

By MARGARET HARRIS

What does your company do?

Our goal is to create a more streamlined and efficient entry-level recruitment environment.

The objective is to get to a place where hiring is merit based and allows job seekers to find jobs that are suitable for them in a dignified and affordable way.

We do this by providing job centres throughout the country that allow young job seekers to create profiles, get assessed and access many opportunities in a streamlined way.

We also work with various government

and other funders to address labour market inefficiencies and create incentives for large-scale employment projects.

How did you end up doing what you do today?

After failing to find a fulfilling job elsewhere, I started a few internet cafes. As bandwidth and smartphones got cheaper, the internet cafe business model came under pressure.

However, job seekers kept coming in looking for jobs, so I started looking for ways to assist them.

We partnered with a few co-founders, and we converted the internet cafes into job centres with the aim of trying to get job seekers into work.

What five things make people more employable?

- Showing up for interviews – if you ain't in it, you can't win it;
- Degrees or diplomas – they always help;
- Resilience – in any job you need to start somewhere and climb from there;

● Living in the right area – one of the most important requirements from any employer is that you are close to the job; and

- Computer skills.

What did you want to be when you were a child?

I don't remember having any clear idea of what I wanted to do.

What do you love most about the work you do?

I love creating teams that surprise you by doing things you couldn't do yourself.

The feeling of creating something sustainable beyond yourself is just the most exhilarating thing.

What part of your job would readers find most surprising?

The amount of time I spend on things unrelated to the job just to make sure people are happy and able to perform to their maximum.

What makes you good at the



Jake Willis loves creating something sustainable 'beyond himself' and seeing teams achieve things he cannot.

work you do?

The ability to understand what makes people tick, and finding ways to make their jobs easier.

Ultimately, everyone wants to get things done, and I am often able to help them find the best way to do it. It is also crucial to constantly be able to innovate and get people to

buy into the message.

What is the best career advice you have ever received, and who gave it to you?

When I was growing up, my father used to say: "Don't accept the world the way it is – imagine it the way you want it to be, and try to create it."