

Nick Turner

## PHD RESEARCHER IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

*MSc Management, Organizational Behaviour, Queen's 1998*  
*BA Psychology, Queen's 1997*  
*Bachelor of Commerce, Queen's 1996*

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*In his own words: "Always be happy; never be satisfied. Do what you enjoy."*

Nick Turner recognizes that his roots lie in people, rather than any particular place. "Although I lived in Scarborough for the first seventeen years of my life, I don't feel a connection there at all. All of my family and most of my friends have moved or keeping moving to different parts of the world, so now it seems natural for me to keep moving, too."

High school studies, he admits, had little influence on his decision to pursue post-secondary education. "While I liked school, I certainly felt I was getting more of an education outside of class. For five years, I was a part of a group of students and teachers who were enthusiastic about computer systems and education. We 'consulted' on these topics within the school and in some cases across the school board, and in the process I learned how organizations worked. So when it came to thinking about university, I thought studying business would be a natural extension of this."

In retrospect, Nick's decision about which universities to apply to was not particularly well considered, but fortunately, it worked out well. "I applied to a number of schools, but there really wasn't much deep thought involved in the process. I was probably too wrapped up in what we were doing with the computers to recognize what my options were. Fortunately, I made a good choice."

Nick started a Queen's Commerce degree in 1992, but he realized by his second year that he wasn't entirely comfortable with the program. "I had to try something different to find out whether it was me or the program that was unsettling me, so I applied for a third-year exchange. Having taken two German courses as electives, I decided to go to Germany. The experience taught me a great deal about what was important to me. I learned that I had to take charge of my own education and not just let a particular degree program drag me along the 'normal' route. For example, I didn't like the strategy of choosing upper-year courses just so I could be a commodity on the job market. That approach just didn't feel right to me."

Returning from the exchange, Nick focused his attentions on organizational behavior courses and other aspects of social and cultural psychology. "Organizational behavior and psychology were the courses I liked in my first two years. I still loved these subjects when I took them in a foreign language, so I thought, 'Yup, that's what I'm going to do.'" He applied his German business courses toward his Commerce degree and continued to take courses that ultimately gave him a second degree in psychology.

For Nick, the psychology degree added theoretical breadth to the analytical skills he had learned in Commerce. "The way universities divide up academic subjects can be very artificial, making it easy for students to

limit their views of the world in the name of completing a particular degree. It's important to think of whatever you're doing from different perspectives and to take courses from other areas that challenge these views. I am pleased faculties at Queen's now give students a chance to do this."

Along with the academic side of things, Nick enjoyed working with Queen's residences. "I got really involved in the residence system, working as a don and eventually a residence coordinator. It was super working with staff and students who had very different skills and views on life. Some of my colleagues there remain really great friends today."

"Working with the residents and the issues they faced as they adjusted to university life was great personal development for me. And as someone interested in life in organizations, the work embodied much of what I was learning in class."

Nick was planning to make his second degree an Honours degree, but four days before school began, he was encouraged by a professor to apply to the new M.Sc. program in Organizational Behaviour that was being offered by the School of Business. "Graduate work really interested me, simply because it allowed me to follow my interests. Fortunately, it was the inaugural year of this particular program, so it meant there was flexibility in the admission deadline. It was an unbelievable chance."

"The M.Sc. program is very different from an MBA because it is research based. I had the chance to work in extremely small graduate seminars and take some doctoral-level courses as well." Nick knew he wanted continue into a Ph.D. program, but he was interested in

studying elsewhere. "Queen's has a superb program with some phenomenal people, but I felt after five years in Kingston, it was important for me to forge paths elsewhere."

After applying to a number of Ph.D. programs in the United States and Britain, he accepted an offer in Britain. However, just prior to the start of his studies, he received word that there might be some funding available on a joint industry project based at another UK university, working with some extremely capable people. Once again, at the last moment, Nick changed his mind and went off to the University of Sheffield, where he is now based. For the last two years, Nick's research

has taken him to petrochemical plants all over the UK to study the effects of self-managing teams on employee safety. He has also had the chance to participate in academic conferences around the world.

Nick says that at the beginning of his

university career he never would have imagined becoming an industrial psychologist. "It took me some time to learn that I should follow my interests and to accept responsibility for my own choices, but once I did, I felt like I was making things happen."

Looking to the future, he anticipates finishing his Ph.D. by the end of 2001 and has decided to stay in academia. "I have realized that great research is as much about who you collaborate with as it's about the actual phenomena you study. I'm looking forward to a greater sense of this community once I've finished my Ph.D. I readily admit I haven't always planned things out, but identifying what I like to do and taking advantage of opportunities that arise seems like a decent plan to me." ❖

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