# Mike Interview 2 - 2018

## C

On reflection how do you feel about leaving the RAF?

## Mike

I am very happy that I have left the RAF what I am not happy about several months on having left August last year is the unintended consequences of hassle lack of income frustration and probably a few other things that have come as a result of that decision.  And that is exacerbated that it was my decision to leave as opposed to being told you are leaving.  So, the only person I have to blame, if that is the right word, for putting myself in that position is me.

## C

We will come into the some of those frustrations but I suppose the key question to ask there is, do you regret it?  Would you do it again if you were in the same situation?

## Mike

yeh that is a really good one because I have thought about it.  I don't regret the decision because I still overwhelmingly think that leaving for the reasons that I did leave those reasons still exist and therefore it was the right decision.  If I was sitting here now talking to you with my new career sorted and I was already going in it I would be sitting here one hundred percent sitting here saying it was the right decision because everything else has worked.  Because it hasn't worked in the way that I had expected or hoped there is that doubt but the act of leaving was the right thing to do.

## C

If there is one thing you could change about that, going back, about that leaving experience is there anything you would change in the lead up to leaving?

## Mike

If I had total control over the situation I would, I would loved to have been clear about what I was trying to achieve career wise before I left but I recognise that would have been neigh on impossible to achieve because I am still sitting here today trying to work out what the heck I am doing.  But yes, if I could crystal ball it and go buff change, I prior to leaving would have been much much clearer in what I am trying to do, how I would go about that so that I wouldn't be faffing around to the degree that I feel that I am.

## C

Right, how long did you give yourself between making that decision to leave and getting out?

## Mike

It was a year.

## C

So, do you think that wasn't long enough in retrospect?

## Mike

I don't think it would have made a difference in my case because this trying to find out what I can do, where I can do it and where I fit has really only taken bigger momentum since leaving because I have had the freedom of time to do it.  Even if I had had three years to take a figure prior to leaving, I think I would end up in a very similar position to where I am today talking to you today I don't think time in my particular case is the issue all I would have done is spent longer trying to work out where I am going but still ended up at the same point.

## C

And do you think that is perhaps because when you were working in the Air Force your focus was on that and you didn't have the capacity whilst you were working to think about what came next?

## Mike

yes and no.  yes, from the point of view that as we all know if you are spending 5 days a week doing a job of some sort you are not then focusing on your future that said I am very conscious that the resettlement process gives you tones of scope to spend time looking at you so it is not a failure of the system by any means.  But the reason why the momentum has built massively since I left is because there is nothing else getting in the way of me spending as much time as I wish Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, talking to people, applying for jobs etc etc etc. Does that answer the question?

## C

Yes. So, the leaving process itself I remember speaking to you and you were very calm about it, you were very happy about it.  Would you say it went well?

## Matt

yes, and yes in reflection absolutely what has changed since then, I will go back one step.  My view on my circumstance and feeling towards it has been cyclical, it has gone from this is going well, this is crap, this is going well, this is crap this is well this is really crap.  Hey I am getting somewhere so it has changed all the time there's not been one consistent view.  What has happened over time is that I have become more frustrated with the process of a trying to identity where in the heck do I fit best, but the frustration of the fact there have been relatively few people or organisations that really care and that have tried to assist Matt.  Now I don't feel bad about that because that is how the world ticks and people's agenda isn't to help Matt.  So, I but I have been more frustrated by the process as time has gone on and frustration is one of the words that will frequently come up in our chat about this.  That said just be absolutely clear people like career transition partnership, officers’ association these guys have been fantastic they have been a great help.  I am just talking about people outside the wider world and the number of instances where I have dealt with recruitment agencies people within companies, applying to companies where the initial impression is yes Matt I am sure we can help you out and then puff nothing and it requires me following up with people and still getting absolutely nowhere.  As time has gone on I have adjusted my view for while I still find it frustrating I don't find it now surprising.  While originally, I found its surprising I thought why aren't people saying Matt clearly you are a great guy you have got skills of course we are going to help you.

## C

Ok so that’s different to what you expected,

## Matt

yes. slightly different, I never expected it to be easy but it’s been harder than I expected.

## C

To get people to so it all centres around work doesn't it, it all centres around that.

## Matt

Oh, totally. If I had enough cash as we all wish but if I had enough cash that work was not a big issue then the fact of leaving the military would have been without question the right thing to do.  The only thing that has caused it to be revaluated maybe not have been still the right thing to do but right had I known how difficult it had been been between leaving and where I am now I might in hindsight have stuck around in the military for another couple of years for example.  Because not that I would have been any clearer in terms of how I was leaving but it would have been 2 years of more in my case Squadron Leader income and going towards pension whilst over things in my life such as my wife changing jobs etc etc was bedding in whilst what I have ended up with is a circumstance where I've lost my permanent income I am trying to work out where in the heck I am trying to get to  work wise readjusting to various aspects of life with and the other thing is of course we got married in amongst this as well which put me in even greater financial strain so all of those things together were not well timed.

## C

It all happens at once. Ok so if you could go back in time and give yourself some advice what would it be?  Wat advice would you give to somebody ese about to go through this process?

## Matt

I think it would have been hard to have done things differently to the way I have done it. I think just looking, because you know I have looked back on my scenario so many times and reviewed it and thought how could I have done this differently.  I suppose the only advice to anyone leaving is every dace is different and so I know people who have left the military and before they have even finished their terminal leave they are in a great job.  So, it is totally individual perhaps that is the first learning point.  Try not to compare yourself with Joe Bloggs you know who left.  Because some will have had great success in terms of finding future work others will take a lot longer so don't compare yourself with others because there is no equilibrium there is no normal I would suggest.  But also, to suggest that if you are lucky and you go about things in a certain way you might end up being employed pretty quickly but be prepared for the fact you might not.  That is probably the best advice because if in your own mind and in terms of your own finances you are prepared to accept that for possibly 6 months a year after leaving you either have no employment or you are doing jobs you didn't think you'd have to just to earn money just be aware that could be your scenario.  I left not naively but hoping that the world would appreciate what I had to offer far more than it appears to have done so thus far.

## C

So, going back 11:38 to the military what do you miss most about the RAF?

## Matt

The positive thing I suppose is that in terms of the RAF as a thing I do not miss anything.  I genuinely I do not miss anything.  I massively appreciate everything I have had I never not once have I gone oh gosh I wish I was back in the mess or doing this or doing that.  All that I am missing are the tangible things that I had which were a fixed income of a good level, a feeling of I guess a feeling of purpose because I had a job which was doing a certain thing and I still believe that in the main we were doing things which were good for the UK.  So that purpose bit has gone for now but it is those types of things rather than the RAF or the military per se.  All I need to do now is fill that void of work purpose, well it is more than just work but that feeling of purpose and income with something else.  Once I have done that if there were any doubts about leaving then that will have gone. gone.

## C

Ok so we touched on this earlier but in what ways does your military experience still influence you in your everyday life now?

## Matt

I think expectations, expectation of people in terms of what I feel by default people should do things that they say they are going to do.  They should be efficient they should be effective I've been let down by so many people who say they are going to do X, Y and Z and just never hear from the ever again.  I think the biggest thing was expectations, things that were in my head that I didn't realise because I had been surrounded by it for 16 years.  And has been brought into stark contrast with the wider world and so I am continually having to reappraise my expectation of the world of people and that is not all negative it is just a difference because I have existed day to day within quite a bubble I didn't realise how much of a bubble and it has taken time to realise that.

## C

And that is people effectively promising to take action on something and then not.

## Matt

That has been a big part of butting my head against so to give you one concrete example, just one throw away one and it is minor in itself but it illustrates the point.  So, I was recommended through a mate of mine ex-RAF about a particular recruitment agency for logistics and so I got in touch with this individual who had been a named and recommended as a point of contact and I sent him my CV and he said yep great yeh really like your CV I am going to have a chat with DHL and a couple of other people.  A period of time went by one two weeks I forget exactly so I phoned him up well I did several e-mails then phoned him up.

## C

Was he ex-Air Force?

## Matt

No this is a recruitment guy, he could be ex-Air Force but I doubt it somehow so I was continually having to prompt him.  So, when I eventually spoke to him on the phone call yeh yeh I am just waiting to hear ack from so and so and nothing.  And at that point I thought stuff you I am not wasting my time and that is just one of several examples of similar scenarios where things haven't happened and every time you get this there is a little bit of knowing away of how important you feel.  Because clearly, no not clearly, but the feeling is I am not important to you.  Coming from our fairly privileged officery bubble you are by nature important in some sense sometimes you are reminded you are not important in the scheme of things but day to day you have apposition of authority and responsibility etc and then you encounter some absolute berks in the real world where the feeling certainly in my mind is often one of well you are not important you don't matter you have no real relevance to me whoever that person is and yeh I have found that very hard to deal with.

## C

I have felt similar things myself that we can chat about later.  but you are not alone in thinking that either.  So, in what ways does your military experience continue to influence you in your day to day.

## Matt

I think massively again in ways I didn't appreciate because when I was in the bubble it was just normal 17:33 the fact that this whole process is one of planning, planning, planning and re-planning which I am sick to death of now because I like results. So, I am planning and re-evaluating but it is using all the ways of thinking that I have done over the last 16 years being organised, the way that I am approaching people, in fact one of the frustrations is that quite often I just feel like I am just pissing in the wind, which isn't the way I like to go about life.  I like to, I am used to even if you don't get a result you plan if I do this something is going to happen and then I can do something else.  Whereas what is I am doing is lots of effort and apparently absolutely nowhere.  But it is those skills of organising, planning, evaluating and re-evaluating being disciplined doing what you say you are going to do those things are still very much there.  Just as a quick funny adjunct so I have been doing quite a lot of freelance training work with a company called QA and a number of the people I have been training have been apprentices working for big companies but apprentices and the attitudes I have had to deal with, with a lot of these kids has been astounding because they are just so not military it is not funny.  When I first started teaching these kids who didn't turn up on time in fact often many of them turning up very late not doing as I was asking them to do was really putting my nose out of joint originally because I felt, thinking from a military point of view, I felt these people are not respecting me they are not respecting the way things should be, should be being a key word because they are working on a very different way of viewing the world to me, but that was a very military thing, and I have had to it’s probably been quite useful, I have had to readjust my thinking on that massively, because otherwise I was going to give myself a heart attack before I'd even got anywhere. So, the military bit has continues in practically every aspect of life.

## C

That is very interesting, you pin pointed it it’s not about a lack of respect they don't even think about it.

## Matt

It is a totally different way of viewing things.  And at the time when I first started dealing with them I thought this is just crap, it’s actually done me a lot of good because it has forced me to change the way I think to some degree and how I approach this particular type of people, group of people which has probably helped me.

## C

So, in what ways have you had to adapt?

## Matt

So I have had to be more flexible in the way I am thinking, I have had to be more relaxed in a sense the way I am thinking, so for example if people don't turn up on time recognising that is nothing to do with me at all its no reflection on me it’s just how they view things because it just doesn't matter to them and so I can either get really cross about it or I can just accept the fact that this is how it is still for example let them know that is not the way I work and what I would appreciate next time is that you are on time but that is the end of it.  I did on the first couple of sessions take 2 people outside and have a real bark at them which of course not only got me cross but I had these bewildered looking people looking at me thinking what in the heck are you on about.  Because to them it didn't matter I was just being an absolute nut but of course they had crossed over my line over what was right as I saw it at that time.  So, I have had to adjust in order to get the best out of other people but also just to manage myself if you like.

## C

What has been the most striking thing about civilian life from a personal point of view?

## Matt

So, I suppose in day to day life there has been no change in the sense that I go into Sainsburys it is no different now to how it was before so it really is only in terms of professional life that there is the difference.  So for example if I were not looking for work because I was so loaded it didn't matter then actually I would probably see very little change in life because every other aspect of my life would be as normal, because I was already living in my own home and already in that let say community for want of a better word, that has just carried on as before it would have been a bigger change if I'd moved from let’s say living in the mess full time to suddenly going oh my God now I have to look after a house bla bla all of that was normal anyway none of that has changed it is only the career related bit.  And I suppose the other career challenge is trying to find work I don't if you want to talk about that or if that will come out?  So, I have had to readjust on almost a daily, weekly basis what am I trying to achieve because this whole thing has been an investigation in terms of the jobs I have applied for those jobs that I have interviews for and not had interviews for which has of course been the greater number of things the feedback I have had post interviews, my 10,000th rewriting of my cv. Which I go from stuff it I am never changing this CV again to maybe I should just tweak it bit in light of what I have just experienced if I never have to write a CV again in my life which I probably will, I will be very happy.  There it has been a continual adjustment and I think that is what has been wearing is there hasn't been a consistency in anything in terms of my approach or how I view the scenario it has been a constantly changing process and while I recognise that is normal cause that is inevitable I will be happy when I don't have to do that quite so consciously every week.  25:09

## C

So, what skill taught you that has been most helpful?

## Matt

I think tenacity, now that may or may not have been there regardless of the military, I think realising that you just, I mean I can't give up on this process because I need work, but attitude wise there are some days when I have thought this is the most crap thing and then there have been other days when I think do you know what this is going really well but it is that tenacity that you are moving along a process and you have just got to keep ploughing at it.  That resilience which we, without banging on about it in the military and I thin actually it probably does factor.

## C

What has been your personal challenge, you got married which is obviously different but …

## Matt

This is probably a good point to mention that the overriding feelings that have come out of this are frustration which I am sure you hear from other people and to some degree a feeling of being lost, lost in direction lost in focus, lost in terms well what do I mean to the world of work.  Because I had a meaning, I had a very clear meaning whether I liked it or not there was a meaning and a structure of going where … I know I am worthwhile I know I have skill and I know when somebody takes that on full time they will go wow isn't Mike a great guy, glad we got him.  But until that happens there is that lostness.

## C

Somebody else described it as being adrift.  Adrift in a dinghy and I can't even see land.

## Matt

Yes.  I think that is a beautiful way of putting it I would go with that.

## C

It was a lovely way to say something so horrible.

## Matt

It’s great and it doesn't mean you are not going to find land it just means that you have set out on a voyage to carry the analogy and you thought the land was over there and you would be there over a couple of months but that land wasn't there like everyone promised because the map was a bit wrong for you and yeh you are adrift, nice one.

## C

So, do you still see yourself as part of the military family? Or are you outside of that now?

## Matt

I am very proudly part of the ex-military family.  I certainly hanker for feeling that I am still in although I do recognise there are a few things about being in that I cherish luckily, I still have a wide network of friends that are still in so that connection hasn't gone.  I was at Halton House for a friend’s wedding very recently and so I was back to wear I had been based once so I am still part of the RAF Club so, no I am very happily an ex-part of it.

## C

Have you joined any associations?

## Matt

No no I am not part of any of that.

## C

Any particular reason or?

## Matt

It just hasn't been on my radar, I was very clear in my mind that when I left I left. I left for reasons and I'd gone. The only thing the only thing I would subtlety change about now is that I am now opening my mind purely from an income point of view, that the idea of say a service job could be on the cards if I find that continuing down the line still isn't getting me anywhere then turning to an organisation that I know already values my skills and is prepared to pay me for that is something I may consider whereas you ask me that 4 or 5 months ago I would have said never, never, never.  That is probably the biggest change but that is not because I desire to be in the RAF, it is because I desire to earn income and I need to earn income with someone who values my skills.

## C

It’s an economic financial decision not a belonging decision.

## Matt

Totally, give me one million quid off the lottery today and these problems change totally.

## C

I wish could.  So, what would you say motivates you now, your self-motivation.

## Matt

Above and beyond earning income.

## C

We talked a bit about value and purpose.

## Matt

Yes, you are absolutely right because what I have realised, and actually this is a good realisation for me and probably not dissimilar to many.  I have realised that earning income is my crucial number one factor now but doing something where I am valued, where I feel of use is nearly as important, so for example

## C

Cause you could have quite frankly got a job

## Matt

and I have been in the position where I have actually stopped interview processes because I have realised that job isn't what I want to do.  So, you are absolutely right.

## C

I'd like to know about that then

## Matt

Shall we talk about both those right now then?

## C

yes

## Matt

There is 2 of them that are very clear.  So, the company ZX that I am working for freelance came about because I went for a job interview to be a senior lecturer with them. They short listed me lied me but didn't choose me because someone who was already within that industry with a doctorate which is what they really needed as an academic related institution got the job.  But they so liked me that that is how I've ended up doing free-lance work with them.  They have also, the person who has been in charge of me, for want of a term, through me a job that was an operations management job within this company saying this job hasn't been advertised yet but I have got sight of it, have a look and I can put in a word for you if you wish.  And I looked at it and I thought it’s not in the location I want which was slough, and actually that job itself didn't appeal so after giving it consideration I said no I won’t thanks very much. So that was an offer of a job, not the job itself but it was getting close to it.  Also, I went for job interviews with Asda, change management within logistics and in the first interview they liked me a lot bit didn't understand me.

## C

What do you mean?

## Matt

Because I wasn't coming from their background

## C

language?

## Matt

everything language, background, they understood that I could do stuff and I could do stuff they needed to do but they needed some decoding to understand what that really was.  And so they offered me to go through to second round interviews which was their short list of interviews and I agreed to go to it and a few days before hand I thought do you know what I don't want this job both in terms of what it was offering because logistics isn't really what I want to do, I was only getting that far because I had a logistics background that I could demonstrate and also the pay wasn't high enough for what I wanted and for what they needed me to do and so I stopped it at that point.  And again I could have very easily continued along that now it may or may not have given me the job but it would have given me the avenue and I stopped it so that is two things off the top of my head that I have stopped in their tracks before I let them go any further34:00 so I am a mix of contradiction because I am wanting a job but I am equally saying that is not right for me.

## C

Or just an awkward buggar.

## Matt

So, I do recognise that in some respects I am not making this process easy for myself but again I have this mix of things in my head of which I am trying to achieve which I am ultimately some of those are clear and some of those are vague but of course every month that goes by the financial imperative gets greater so there may well come a point in the not too distant future where if I have an avenue and I think stuff it I will continue moving down this line because ultimately that is going to give me money at the end of it and experience but as of today that is not where I am at because as of today although there is a financial imperative there is enough in the bank, that, while I have seeing it going backwards I am not at poverty door yet.

## C

Most people I am interviewing are not the main bread winners for their family.  They don't have that million pound in the bank that they would like but they don't have to work and so it is a different set of dynamics going on, but I admire your determination and patience as much as resilience to wait for the job that is going to.... We talked about your fit, what is your fit? What exactly are you looking for?

## Matt

It’s a very good point I am not even sure I am sure of it totally myself.  In fact, I know I am not clear of it totally myself, but so I love the training and development side of life which is why I have ended up doing this work with XZ I've been banging around the fringes of trying to make developing people the thing that I do as time has moved on as time has moved on I have realised that trying to make that a high enough paying thing that is reliable is difficult.  Not impossible but difficult so which is why I have kept pinging between applying for jobs that are let’s say more main stay, more management related jobs logistics related jobs where perhaps the path into it is easier because of my back ground but it is not really where my heart lies because none of those are specifically about developing people so I am now looking at roes where can I lay rely upon the management and operations management side of my life.  Which gets me in the door and perhaps gets me the well enough paying job but also within its scope allows me to develop teams so in that sense I am still developing but developing is a by-product of a job as opposed to that is the job.  One job that I have applied for and I had a phone call from them about so I think I am getting somewhere in the process, literally only about 2 or 3 days ago is head of air operations with Network Rail which is an interesting one because it strongly relates and which is why I have got into some degree is because it is Air Operations, it is planning it is strategy it is writing policy it is requiring an air appreciation, because they have a massive drone and helicopter aspect for all of their surveying side of things nationally, and so something I never realised existed but therefore they don't want people who work with rail the need people who appreciate the air environment.  Now whether that is going to get any further I don't know but the person who is the current incumbent phoned me the other day and we have had a chat.  To be seen whether that gets any further or not.  Whether that gets me any further in the conversation so that is relying on the air background I have got but it is also relying on the strategy policy dealing with a wide range of internal and external customer which is what I enjoy doing but there is also a team of people that you are responsible for so this type of thing might be the example of how I try and pull together a number of aspects of what I like and who I think I am about.  But it is not necessarily for example as I had hoped training and developing people.  But it is a job with a certain status, a certain income that comes with that which ticks Matt's other boxes.  Status is very important.  I am looking for something that I have a level of importance to others, but I think just as importantly, more importantly within myself.  That need to feel as if I am, I hesitate to say important but I think that is what it is, that I have responsibility, that I have importance that I have respect of people at certain levels that I can do certain things that I can be empowered to do certain things that is massively important.

## C

About that status, to me it is not wanting to be wandering round going I am the big I am,

## Matt

It’s definitely not

## C

it’s about being valued and appreciated.

## Matt

yeh and I didn't realise

## C

So, status is almost the wrong word.

## Matt

Maybe it is cause status implies how do people think of me, this is very much, it’s part of it but it is far more about how I value me how do I see me and I didn't realise, here is a good point, I didn't realise when I left the military how important my job was, was to my viewing of myself.  I believed, in fact I scoffed at people who, not just in the military, who when they leave work part of them disappears.  I thought what a load of bollocks basically, you are going to have to annotate that.

## C

No there is plenty of swearing in my interviews.

## Matt

What a load of nonsense, because who I am is my friends, is my wife is all of that, my job is not part of that.  I have realised as time has gone on that yes, it is.  Which is why I am being picky about the sort of job I get.  Right Asda, the Asda job I didn't go along with in that process I realised I was going to be a very, to say a minor cog within the chain isn't quite right, cause you could argue that within the military which is huge you are also a very small part of the chain but I think culturally you are more valued but within that Asda job.

## C

Do you mean culturally within society?

## Matt

No within the organisation.  With the Asda job I could very easily see, or I thought I could see I was just going to be one of X minions whose job was predominantly cost saving important to the degree you were going to get paid something but that was about it and could just as easily be fired the next week.  Whilst I realise that is the commercial world I don' want to be in an organisation where that is probably the daily thought.

## C

The stress that comes with that.  So, saying all of that, as you look to the future where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?

## Matt

I don't.  Not in the position I am in today is probably the best thing I can say because I will have moved to something else.  I am so busy trying to work out what the next month plan that the 5-year plan doesn't even factor.  All I will say is that in my thinking in 5 years from now I will be well and truly imbedded into a new way of life that today I can't picture.  From a personal point of view, I hope that Wren and I have a family by that point which again, as you well know, changes the whole dynamic.  But from a career point of view I will be embedded into something new and I can't tell what that is until the next thing happens.

C

I there anything else?

## Matt

I think that the overall summary is that when I left the military, where I am today being so different from where I had imagined.  Even though I didn't have a clear picture of what it was it is just not what I thought.  But I have learnt and continue to learn a huge amount about me in this process and perhaps this is the defining factor.  Bingo.  If I had stayed in the military longer I still wouldn't have learnt any more about me because I would have still stayed in the same bubble doing the same thing.  Which is why it has been crucial to leave to then go through this process.  I think that is the best way to sum it up. You know I don't think I could have come to that realisation without us talking that through. 45:01