

Zero Lives Left Podcast Success After University Episode 33

- Wayne Denner:** Micky Quigg is Development Officer at New York GAA working underground with clubs and schools to ensure the continued growth of Gaelic Games and the Irish culture at all levels. His role includes club development, planning, implementation. Responsible for the minutes and tasks, completion of work carried out by the juvenile hurling board, development of links between club and local feeder schools, conducting introductory sessions for individuals who have never heard of the game. Delivery of the New York player's academy, coaching academy, refereeing academy in which individuals are taught about factors outside of the game including injury prevention, dietary requirements, and mental health through a number of formal presentations and informal group work. Micky, thanks for taking time out to joining me on the Zero Lives Podcast all the way from New York city.
- Micky Quigg:** Thanks for having me, that was a lovely introduction, thank you.
- Wayne Denner:** Not a problem Micky. We've tried to get this podcast set up for a while now. We've had power failures, we just couldn't get things co-ordinated. I'm so glad you're on the show. I've been following your journey for a while. I think I first came across you in Belfast when you were working for the University of Ulster?
- Micky Quigg:** Yeah, Ulster University Student Union.
- Wayne Denner:** I was delivering a workshop speaking to stakeholders and students about the importance of online reputation and building your profile online. So I've kinda been following your journey. I noticed you had got this opportunity in the States, you're working for Development Officer for New York GA, I thought this would be a perfect opportunity to get you on, talk about your story, so that any students listening in, who want to go traveling to the states, maybe work over there after university, this will be great insight for them. Let's get right into it here, because we have a lot to cover and a lot of great things we're going to discuss. So you're currently employed by New York GAA, you're based in New York city, living in the Bronx. You really work on the ground, you're at a

grassroots level which is really interesting. You're working with clubs and schools, which must be fascinating. Bringing the GA scene, the whole aspect of the Irish culture to schools in the New York state area. It sounds like a great role, how did you get into it?

Micky Quigg: That's a good question. Last summer I came out, I finished my role in the Students Union around June. In July or August, I came out for a bit of a break to see a few family and friends. Luckily I seen a few job adverts online. I just applied for it, got through the first stage, got through the second and the final three. I was successful after that. Once I went back to Ireland I got my visa finalised. I officially started on October 2nd. It was the right time for me.

Wayne Denner: The Big Apple, its very busy, there's lots happening I'd imagine. Obviously a big Irish scene over there. What's the reception like, are the schools interested in getting students involved in this, getting children involved in the Gaelic Games scene?

Micky Quigg: There's two things. I'd say the Irish emigrated over here 20, 30 years ago. To me they are more passionate and they're more hard working as its more difficult over here to go to the game. There's so much other sports here, you have American Football, Baseball, Lacrosse, Soccer is massive over here. The thing they offer is scholarships for School and College. It is much more interest in the sport, you can see a lot more colleges picking up Gaelic football and showing a real interest towards it. It has its challenges, like everything.

Wayne Denner: Take me back, before you went to the states, whenever we first got introduced to each other you were working for the Ulster University Students Union, what did that role encapsulate, what were the things you were involved in while you were based here?

Micky Quigg: I was in Ulster University Students Union for three years. That's an elected position, every year you have to run a campaign to get in. Vice president for Student and Academic Affairs for GAA campus, which is based in Derry. That was giving out student advice, going to meetings with the university with the local community, with organisations being that point of information, point of call on campus.

For my final year I was in charge of campaigns and communications across the four campuses, that involved the social media channels for the Students Union, organising the Mental Health campaign, the voter age, alcohol awareness on all four campuses. I really enjoyed it, I probably enjoyed it the most as you're able to go about, you can meet students, go to Students houses, you are in halls, you're on the ground. It's fairly enjoyable.

Wayne Denner: Core focus of the Zero Lives Podcast is we get a lot of students who are listening, a lot of graduates listening in. Real folk thinking about what's next after university. Let's think beyond university out into the world of work. What are three key skills that students need to develop in order to become more successful?

Micky Quigg: Communication, you have to know how to communicate, not only in person but knowing how to put your point across whether you're writing a document, or putting it down on paper. I think having good communication. Being able to talk through your ideas in a fluid way can go a long way. Another one will be a team player. Know when to work with a lot of people, but know when you need to step up and take the lead in a situation. I think being a team player also means knowing when to listen, and when to talk and how to deal with difficult situations. There's times and people you're going to find hard to work with, but you have to put your best foot forward and do what's best for the operation for the program. The last is focus. Be driven, be enthusiastic. Know what you want and go for it. Even the likes of myself, I had the idea of coming out to the US for eight months. I got a lot of nos. You have to keep at it if you want something bad enough. That's my three, communication, team player and having that focus and drive.

Wayne Denner: I think those are great. Really important for all aspects of life as well. I think sometimes a lot of people struggle with communication. Maybe trying to articulate their ideas, getting their opinion across, delivering a presentation. These are skills that are important and can be refined overtime. I remember when I started doing the work I do. Standing and giving presentations scared the crap out of me. Now I may be speaking to 300-500 people at any given time in a School Assembly. The more you practice and the more you develop communication skills, the more effective you will become. It's such an important skill. When I was working in America,

whenever you were communicating, particularly with people who don't understand your accent .

Micky Quigg: Exactly. That's a good one. Even the tone you need to watch.

Wayne Denner: I spent a lot of my time working in other countries. I travel. Communication skills is important and it's important you understand language barriers. Many people overlook, its whenever they leave university, and they go out into the world of work, maybe they're struggling to be successful in interviews, maybe they're tasked with delivering a presentation. I think that's a really good one. You mentioned becoming a team player and then focusing on what you want. You didn't get that opportunity overnight, you had to work and work and work. You got knockbacks, but you didn't give up because you were focused on the end goal. The end goal was to get an opportunity to work in the States.

Micky Quigg: If you work hard, sooner or later things come your way. Maybe not in the way you expected it, but they will come your way in some form.

Wayne Denner: Absolutely. Sport in particular Hurling, has played a key role in your life. When I was doing research for our conversation, you've been involved in a number of different aspects of sport, I think sports important because it helps people develop key skills which are transferable into the field of work. What do you think are some of the skills which you developed in sport which have helped you in your daily working life?

Micky Quigg: Going back to the three skills. I'd say leadership, teamwork, communication, commitment, confidence focus. As well as being self-disciplined, having that mental fitness. We all need something, whether its sport or reading a book, travelling, meditation. Everybody needs something to take their mind off work, their relationships, their family, you need that outlet. Sport helped me develop them skills. Things took off when I went to university. I got involved in Coaching, trying to referee. I'm not much of a player, but I got involved in setting up a little club on our campus. All them different things. If you're not into playing, don't worry about it, there's loads of different ways of getting involved.

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- Wayne Denner:** I think that's great. We're talking about communication skills are pivotal. They play a central role in a lot of what people end up doing. If you're not an effective communicator, it doesn't matter if it's in work or sport, you have to be able to communicate effectively. Leadership is important. What are some of the things define a great leader? What is a good leader?
- Micky Quigg:** Knowing when to talk. Knowing when to listen. To be a great leader, you have to know how and when to communicate with different people in different ways. Going back to as a Coach or Captain in the sporting field. You have to know when to drive individuals and in what way. Some people need encouragement, some people need to be told they are not working hard enough, some need to be told that they're playing just to have in their head to prove you wrong as that's how they get the best of people. I think you need to take every player in your team on an individual level.
- Wayne Denner:** You mentioned mental fitness being important. Sometimes that's overlooked. In the world of business, everybody's life has got so busy, it's so crazy, social media has notifications coming in all over the place. This whole fear of missing out. It's impacting people's mental health and mental fitness is important. Sport is a great outlet for that. I'm guilty of this, I have been saying from the January that I'm joining the gym and going three times a week. Last year I was running, doing 5Ks 10Ks, then I hurt my foot, I was in a state of, not full depression, but I was kind of depressed that I wasn't able to get out and exercise. It had an impact on my mental health, it's easy to overlook. It's important.
- Micky Quigg:** I couldn't agree more. Getting injured, once you have a set routine and a way of how you exercise. Once you lose that, you spend more time on social media, work. That tension and stress can build up.
- Wayne Denner:** It builds up and can take you off your game. Other aspects of your life can suffer. You need to have that outlet. Sport is a great channel for that output. Going back to social media. You mentioned the importance in social media in being able to find opportunities in America. How important is social media, in particular LinkedIn, has become for students seeking to find career opportunities. In some of the workshops I deliver, I get students to think about

building that profile on LinkedIn, creating that LinkedIn skillset. You never know what opportunities can open up as a result of being active on the platform. What's your thoughts on that?

Micky Quigg:

Just your point on social media, I'm going to throw a quote, "A good social media takes years to build, but seconds to destroy." That stood out to me. 93% of employers check your social media before the interview process. You can tell I bought your book. It's a good read.

Have the sense and the knowledge to look after what you put up. Since that workshop Your personal life should be kept to your friends and family. I found it a very useful outlet. I soon as I got into LinkedIn, when I had the interest to go elsewhere to travel and to get a job in a different county. I wanted to reach out to my alumni networks from Ulster. I wanted to ask questions about how they got out, if they had any ideas, about visas and opportunities, people they could put me in contact with. It's very useful to engage with. To actively use it.

Message people you may think will be useful, who could point you in the right direction. From what I found, people are very happy to help out. Even if its just to send an email, or a website. They are happy to point you in the right direction.

They've all been the person fresh out of university who's a bit unsure of themselves and what they're going to do. We like to get a bit of direction. I see a lot of people do it, so I've started to do it the last six months, posting your progress. I would let things coming up in my work that I want my network to know about. It's a different audience compared to twitter and Instagram more professional. I always post the newsletter of different events that we have going on in New York GA. you don't know what will come from it. I've had meeting with people from organisations from here just because I posted on LinkedIn. It's a useful channel and I wouldn't be sat here today without it.

Wayne Denner:

It's a great channel. It gives people the opportunity to build a professional network. Students should be thinking about and starting to leverage. The earlier you adopt LinkedIn at university the easier it becomes when you graduate. Maybe you're following companies you want to work for. Maybe you've built up a network. Actively using it is important. People are happy to help. I've had nothing but good experience on

LinkedIn. I can't say the same about other social media platforms. The respect on LinkedIn is greater than you'd get on some of the other platforms. You don't run up against trolling and harassment. What I've found is that people are always willing to help on there. It's something I encourage Students. Getting started on LinkedIn as early as possible. It's interesting to see that when I'm in schools talking about career development, I'm amazed at the amount of students who have never heard of LinkedIn. We need to be educating Students about career development in 2018 and where it happens is on LinkedIn. Introduce them when they're 16 or 17, then as they move through university to enhance the profile.

Micky Quigg:

I think for the likes of 17 and 18 year olds, my little sister popped up. Shes 18. When she was 17 she was on mine and asking me questions about putting stuff up and what I thought was valuable. I'll look at someone else's and see something they've done. You can keep adding to it. That professional network, you don't get it on Twitter and Facebook. It's a valuable resource to have.

Wayne Denner:

The great thing about it is that its global. It's not restricted to Northern Ireland. Its global. You never know who you're going to build connections with. You're growing your connections in the United States. You don't know what opportunities that can open up. That's the great thing about it. In my experience with LinkedIn. I think the earlier you tap into it the better. Students listening to the show today, what tips and advice would you share with them to help them prepare for life beyond university? You don't have the Student load hitting the bank, you don't have the nights out none of us can be the enteral student.

Micky Quigg:

I'm gonna answer two fold. If there are any students listening in their first year, my biggest advice is jump in and get involved. Join a society, join a sport. Even if its joining a sport to do the administration side of it. All these different opportunities, they add to your skill base. You're also making more friends in the process. Another thing I would say is, there are so many opportunities you don't get after you leave, I wish I had studied abroad, I wish I had gone to somewhere different whether its Germany, China, the US to take a semester abroad.

People in the third year listening, take the next six months and try and think about where you want to be in three to five year's

time and what are the steps you need to take now. That might involve going to your Career service. Ask your alumni network if anybody is in the sort of role who can direct you in the right direction. Ask questions, network as best you can in these next few months. Don't be afraid to apply as many things as you can. The worst anyone can say is no but they might offer advice.

Last thing to say is challenge yourself. You can still go on the J1 graduate visa for up to a year after you graduate. Maybe something to consider. It would have made my journey over here a lot easier. I didn't come here till three years after I graduated, so it made my situation a bit more difficult with the whole visa.

Be thinking about it.

Wayne Denner:

Those are good tips. University comes to an end and the earlier you prepare and put plans in place. Start to position yourself in the marketplace. Start to build your professional brand online. That's all great stuff.

Finally looking forward to the future, where does Micky Quigg see himself in 3 to 5 years?

Micky Quigg:

To put it in context. My visa is for 18 months; it finishes this time next year. The organisation New York GAA are looking to extend it for a few more years. That's all being discussed. Hopefully it gets accepted and I'll stay for another two years. I think my own goals in my work, things I want to achieve with more clubs, more players doing well in the competitions coming up. Going back to Ireland to compete. In 3-5 years' time I would like to have made more enjoyable experience, improve the skills I have. Have more contact than I have now. I wouldn't mind looking into marketing positions, something in event management. I'll take things as they come. The most important thing is to enjoy what I have. I have a role that I'm sure many people in Ireland would kill for. I'm in no rush.

Wayne Denner:

Having a plan for the future is great but things can change. Getting the experience and the opportunity you have is amazing. There's no better place to work in the world than the Big Apple. People love it. I've never spent that much time in New York city but when I was there it was a great experience. I can't imagine what it must be like to be there on a daily basis.

Micky Quigg:

I'm working with a fantastic group of people, they are very passionate. My boss is across from me. I'm working with a

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great boss. He's very kind to me. He's a great leader. We're a passionate, hard working group. I enjoy what I'm doing, I don't wake up in the morning thinking I can't be bothered. I'm happy where I'm at.

Wayne Denner:

Listen I want to thank you for taking time to join me on the show. It's been a great chat. Just hearing about your journey, I know people from the University of Ulster will be really interested in this podcast. The experience your gaining, working with a talented team, great leadership, great opportunities. You've highlighted great things that students need to be thinking about if they are aspiring to get opportunities like you've managed to get.

Thanks for taking time out to join me on the Zero Lives Left Podcast.