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Andy Rumfitt

Director of Economic Development

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Director of Economic Development

Organisation: AECOM

Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I completed an undergraduate degree at Cambridge University where my focus and passion was on urban and economic geography. I then completed an MPhil in Environmental Planning at Reading University where I focussed on strategic and regional planning.

At the same time I was working as a part time graduate consultant at PA Cambridge Economic Consultants, which employed a number of staff who focussed on spatial economic issues such as the effectiveness of regional policy geography. Much of the consultancy work was geographical in nature (e.g. tourism impact studies in the Yorkshire Dales, regeneration strategy for Merthyr Tydfil). And finally, I have always loved the outdoors, appreciated nature in all its forms and been active in hill walking, running, skiing and cycling in many locations (e.g. Wales, Scotland, Iceland, the French and Italian Alps, the Rockies in Colorado, the Pyrenees and Picos Europa, Australia, New Zealand).

W: www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

I was very lucky to work with some very inspiring applied economists and land economists at Cambridge Economic Consultants in the firm's early days. I didn't realise at the time but this was an "apprenticeship" in all but name. Lesson: get any practical experience you can.

What do you do as part of your role?

I am a Senior Director at AECOM leading 25 economists and economic development consultants in London and Manchester. AECOM is a large multidisciplinary consultancy and we help bring forward major transport projects (such as High Speed 2, Crossrail 2 and Sutton Link), develop and appraise public sector investment and business cases, and devise city and sub-regional strategies. We work for a wide range of public and private sector clients including the Department for Transport, BEIS, Transport for London, Transport Scotland, Network Rail, Highways England, Solent LEP, Enterprise M3 LEP, Coast to Capital LEP, GBS LEP, Herts CC and Essex CC.

In a typical week I will spend about half my time on running my part of the business. That involves working with other Directors to target future work, working with staff on their goals and development, examining our performance, planning work across the team and selling and marketing our services. The other half of my time is spent advising or presenting to clients directly, often as the Project Director, but also by reviewing reports, exploring new ways of doing work and checking quality of what we do.

What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

The key skills and characteristics needed for this role include:

- Strategy development - develop short and long term vision and strategy for economic development consultancy services in specific geographical and client markets.
- Leadership development – from a strategic perspective, identify the skills and capabilities that need to be developed in the short and long term to ensure sustainable performance of the economic development team and specific team members.
- Be an expert - act as a subject matter expert and technical verifier across function, markets and/or geography.
- Business development - ability to create and lead strategic partnerships and long-term fee earning relationships with major economic development clients
- Market development - ability to combine an understanding of market needs and constraints and the organisation's capabilities to develop new and innovative solutions (e.g. digital tools).
- Project management - ability to maximise resources and review the planning and reporting of progress by project managers.
- Problem solving - ability to identify problems and opportunities and analyse information to develop, evaluate and implement solutions across the team and Urban Advisory.
- Leadership - able to lead change effectively, to demonstrate personal composure and be adaptable and flexible in ambiguous and/or fast changing circumstances.

How does geography feature in your work/ what difference does it make?

Since 1992 I have undertaken a range of private sector consultancy roles and public sector roles in local and regional economic development and regional transport operators. Almost all of these involved the application of geographical concepts to support public investments and public policy development, implementation and evaluations. Over 25 years, my professional geographical focus has been on:

- Spatial and economic analysis of local,

regional and national economies in the UK and overseas using primary and secondary research.

- Development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes to reduce spatial and social inequalities (e.g. local and regional economic development and transport strategies, skills, regeneration and business support initiatives)
- Social, economic, equality and health impacts of major public and transport investments (e.g. impact assessments).
- Bringing forward large scale transport infrastructure projects in the UK (e.g. High Speed 1 and 2, Crossrail 1 and 2).

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?

Get a good balanced education at GCSE and A Level, ensuring that you have subjects that link to the natural and built environment. Be comfortable with analysing data and drawing conclusions. Try to focus on what you are passionate about as that see you through the long term.

Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?

Geography enables you to consider spatially some of the biggest challenges affecting the world today. It also opens up many career and travel opportunities and you'll still be interested many years in the future.