Meet the Public Relations Professionals:

Vivianne McDuell: TeamSpirit

http://ow.ly/Xgj1w (LinkedIn Profile)

What are your best memories of Royal Holloway? -This might be a surprising answer to many who know Kingswood Halls...but my best memories of Royal Holloway are the many hap-happenings at Kingswood - spending the summer evenings on the lawn, predrinking in people's tiny bedrooms and the long dinners we shared together in the dining hall. On top of that, the Summer Ball was always a highlight of my year and never failed to disappoint.

How would you sum up your job in three words? - Fast-paced, creative and exhilarating.

What's the best thing about the work you do? - I love the challenge of making the complex simple and bringing financial services to life for the average consumer and to that end, seeing my clients’ names in print, online or on TV!

What's the most challenging aspect of the work you do? - Time pressures - the newsroom/the media never sleep and this means that you constantly have to be on top of daily opportunities for your clients to get their share of voice in the media and to be able to move quickly in doing so.

What advice would you have for students looking to enter the industry? - Work experience - before you enter the world of PR, make sure you get a few weeks of experience at either an agency or in-house. PR certainly isn't for everyone and getting an insight is invaluable.

Alexander Babahmadi: Amanda Wakeley

http://ow.ly/XgqXQ (LinkedIn Profile)

What are your best memories of Royal Holloway? -Founders Quad in the summer time, Spanish classes with Alba Chaparro and my short-lived ridiculous radio show on InsanityFM with a friend.

How would you sum up your job in three words? - Challenging, eye-opening and ridiculous.

What's the best thing about the work you do? - I'm very lucky that I am able to work with visionaries, artists, PRs that I have always looked to for inspiration and touched that I'm able to call them great friends.

What advice would you have for students looking to enter the industry? - Intern, intern, intern!

Andrea Avena: Fraser Communications
What are your best memories of Royal Holloway? My best memories include the visiting Malawi and Spain for Geography field trips, and lots of late night library sessions with my friends. Of course, I have fantastic memories of all of the SU nights over my three years at RHUL!

How would you sum up your job in three words? Challenging, rewarding and exciting.

What’s the best thing about the work you do? It’s fantastic to hear about an exciting restaurant concept, seeing the press releases and images and then reading fantastic reviews from journalists. As someone who has a background in restaurants, I’m so pleased when I see that our client’s hard work (and our hard work!) has resulted in a great review.

What’s the most challenging aspect of the work you do? PR is a fast paced industry, so learning to manage my time, prioritise my tasks and multitask took some getting used to. I’m still learning!

What advice would you have for students looking to enter the industry? So many industries require PR, so find something you are passionate about, then look for PR work in that field. I love food and the London restaurant scene, so reading blogs and magazines about food and restaurants, trying new places and using social media to document my experiences came to me naturally. Being passionate about the places, people and products you are working for is always going to impress journalists.

Work experience is invaluable and shows future employers that you are committed to a career in PR - but don’t work for free for more than a few weeks!

Working in PR involves using your initiative everyday, so when you are interviewing for jobs try to think about times where you have taken the lead in a project or event.

Billie Gianfrancesco: Ministry of Sound

What are your best memories of Royal Holloway? My best memories at RHUL happened either before, during or after a night out at the SU (until I was banned at the end of my final year)! Unfortunately, these are also my foggiest memories...

How would you sum up your job in three words? High pressured, rewarding

What’s the best thing about the work you do? I love the reaction from people who I’ve secured personal PR coverage for. When they see themselves and their achievements in print or broadcast for the first time it can be hugely emotional – it’s a public acknowledgement of their value and can do wonders for their sense of self-worth. You’ll see them in the office the next day full of confidence and beaming with pride. It’s immensely fulfilling.

What’s the most challenging aspect of the work you do? I have many sleepless nights or weekends fraught with anxiety about a piece of coverage coming out – will my bosses be happy with it? Has the journalist had an ulterior motive? Will it meet expectations? However, the most challenging aspect has to be failing to secure any coverage for a story or product my company has spent a lot of
time or money investing in. Usually they are depending on my press coverage to drive sales, so it’s a lot of responsibility.

**What advice would you have for students looking to enter the industry?** Don’t assume that your degree alone will help you get a job in PR – it won’t. You’ll be judged on experience, so you’ll usually have to work for free (at the beginning). Try and get as many internships/work experience opportunities under your belt as possible while you’re still at uni and have financial support available.

Watch the news, listen to different radio stations, buy the papers regularly and read all the sections. Start analysing and questioning everything you watch and read. What is the company behind the story trying to achieve? Why has such and such suddenly decided to reveal all? There’s always a story behind the story, and your ability to recognise this will give you the edge in coming up with creative new ideas for your client. I worked at Smith’s newsagents on St Judes Road in Englefield Green (the purple shop) and secured my first PR internship because the three interviewees before me had only ever read the MailOnline and The Guardian! After spending my weekends inserting supplements into the weekend papers, and organising the shelves of magazines, I could name them all, and tell you which publication would work best for a certain story.