



Alumnus Subject Graduated Place of Work Position Ed Seymour-Lee Management 2008 Saatchi & Saatchi X Senior Account Manager



Saatchi & Saatchi X is a global leader in shopper marketing, revered as the hothouse for world-changing ideas and brand experiences that create sustainable growth for its clients. Ed is part of the client services team, managing shopper marketing campaigns on behalf of P&G and Nikon. He is the day-to-day contact for his clients and his role includes managing the strategic and creative output of his team and competitively pitching for new business.

Great minds *go on to* great places

Why did you choose Royal Holloway?

I had already taken a gap year, so when it came to applying I knew exactly where I wanted to be. I got accepted to Imperial and so I didn't think about looking elsewhere after that. But then I visited Royal Holloway on an Open Day with a friend who wanted to study Management, and it completely changed my perspective: I was sold from then on. It is quite different to anywhere else, being a London university but not in London, and it's a got a great profile as well. I had chosen Imperial without much thought, but as soon as I had been to Royal Holloway I knew that it was for me. I've cherished every moment.

Were you thinking about a career before applying to university?

Yes, but I was torn, as most students are at that age, between the desire to make money and the ambition to do something that truly interested me. I pursued banking for a time, but advertising has been in my family for years; I'm now working on some of the brands that my father directed television commercials for when he worked with Saatchi & Saatchi. In the end, I followed my heart instead of the cash, as it were, and I absolutely feel that my decision has been vindicated. I wouldn't have been as enthusiastic or progressed as quickly if I had pursued banking or finance.

What in particular attracted you to the Management degree?

Management is a broad term and, when I was looking at business courses I wanted to find a programme with a diverse range of subjects. The Royal Holloway degree has that, and classes were scheduled in such a way that allowed you to follow and explore the subjects that you were most interested in. For me it was the Marketing and EU Business modules. What I loved about the lecturers is that they were from their fields as opposed to pure academics, and the real experiences that they used in teaching demonstrated how the theories work in real life and practice. Further, the Management department was such an integral part of the university set-up with more than a third of the student body; other university departments were not heralded as strongly.

What were the most important things you learnt from the programme?

Number one has to be the presentations. In this industry, it's not unusual to have 2-3 strategic or creative presentations to client a day. Developing your presentation style takes time, so without having had the practice of conveying information in this way at university, it would have been much more difficult. Since my work is all about helping brands communicate with shoppers, the way in

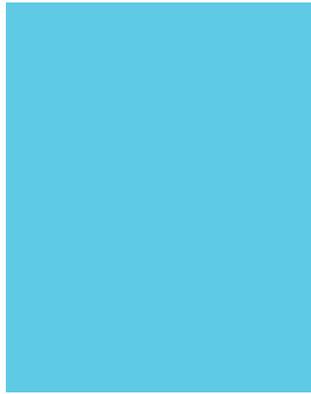
which I communicate with my clients and sell the work has to be clear and concise. I never stop trying to improve, as the only way to progress and finesse your style is to continually do it.

The second thing would be the way in which you interrogate a client's business through real business case studies. In that situation, it's not about management theory as such. Theory is important because it helps you to analyse and critique, but you end up applying it subconsciously so that you sometimes wonder how you have arrived at a certain conclusion, but when you take a second to think you realise that you have answered this question before, or applied this theory in a similar situation, so it does make you think logically.

Were you part of clubs or societies?

I was President of the Hockey Club, a mixed-sex club with a turnover of £50k per year. It is like running a mini business from all aspects including finance, marketing and HR. That's a big deal, and sometimes difficult to manage along with your studies, but I can only recommend that type of involvement. I'm naturally a competitive person and sports enabled me to channel that in the right way through managing a team.





people with passion

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What did you do after graduating?

I went travelling immediately after graduating; it was something that I needed to get out of my system, and the time allowed me to really think about what I wanted to do. I turned down a place on the graduate scheme at Lloyds, and started working for a small experiential agency called MASH with 16 people. I learnt so much; I was given so much more scope and responsibility than I would have had in the equivalent networked agency. I was involved in the final delivery of brand experiences for clients, so there wasn't a great deal of opportunity to influence the brand's strategy. My next career move took me to a design agency called Design Bridge, practically the opposite end of the scale. I'd suddenly gone from a small, independent agency where it wasn't unusual to work the occasional seven day week, to a company where the pace was much slower. My client was KFC (the agencies largest), and I was able to get involved with the brand's positioning from 'finger lickin good' to 'so good', which tuned in to the brand's unique cooking heritage with the aim of changing the consumer perception from a fast food joint to a restaurant that served good food fast.

How did you come to work at Saatchi & Saatchi X?

It seems one of the strongest tools for making career moves these days is LinkedIn. Recruiters can be shameless, ringing you at your desk in your

current agency, but when I heard that the company was Saatchi X and the client was Procter & Gamble, I felt I had to take the opportunity. P&G created the concept of shopper marketing, developing it with Saatchi X, so for me it was the two biggest names in shopper coming together. The concept of shopper marketing is based on the theory that people behave differently when going about their daily lives as consumers than they do when in shopper mode. P&G and Saatchi X work on the principle of 'Storeback' creative development – this means that the big idea has to work at shelf and be understandable to the shopper within three seconds – if not, it cannot be used anywhere else in the consumer journey; as the 'first moment of truth' is when the shopper picks up a product and actively chooses a particular brand.

My accounts are P&G and Nikon. Within P&G, I work on the beauty brands head and shoulders, Wella, and Clairol. My day to day job is client facing: the client's impression of the agency is me. I am involved in collecting briefs, briefing the creative team, working with the client, and developing new business. The bit I enjoy most is the writing of the brief that inspires amazing creative ideas that solve a client's business problems, and the selling of that to the client by championing what we do and putting across our ideas in a buyable way.

What's the most outrageous thing you have done to get a meeting?

In my first agency, being part of such a small team meant everyone was expected to bring business in - we all had a real entrepreneurial flair. The Managing Director wanted a meeting with the ad agency BBH to pitch for some work, but we had no contacts there. Cold calling doesn't work as agencies are naturally very protective of their brands, so my approach was to have our agency's logo and BBH's logo printed on cupcakes, which were hand delivered to the worldwide Creative Director, Sir John Hegarty. Within six hours, we got a call and had set up the meeting. This industry is famous for doing outrageous things, and that was my own way of cutting through.

Best piece of advice you can give to students?

Be brave and have an opinion. Interviews are a tough way of assessing suitability for a job, but if you have an opinion about the industry, even if it is wrong or the interview disagrees, you will stand out without being aggressive or looking foolish. If you are confident in your opinion then that will shine through and the nerves will fall away. Remember in your first job that money isn't everything, so you should make your career decisions with a much wider set of considerations.



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