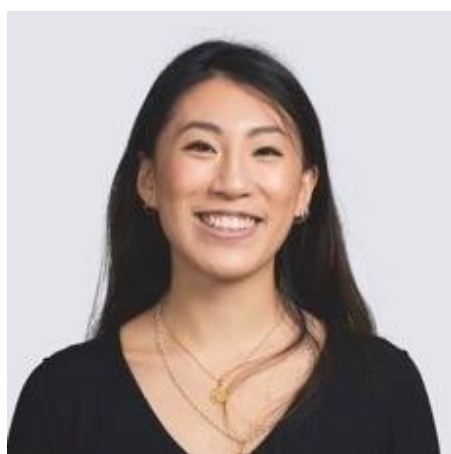


Emma Wong - Strategist (Manager) - Freemavens



Course of study	BA Hons Italian & History of Art	Year of graduation	2015
City / Region / Country	London , UK		

1. Tell us more about your job; an example of day-to-day work, average week, or a recent project (or how would you describe your job to a friend?).

I work agency-side as a Strategist within the marketing and branding sector. Freemavens is a cross between research, brand strategy and consulting. Through analysing consumer data, we help clients understand who their customers are and how they behave, delivering insight and ideas to drive business growth and inspire activation across the 6Ps of marketing. Our agency mainly services the FMCG, retail and consumer healthcare sectors, partnering with Brand Managers and CMI Directors (i.e. the Consumer and Marketing Insights function) to identify business challenges and develop solutions. We are part of a larger group of agencies called MSQ, each specialising in a different area of marketing.

My role is client-facing so I am involved in meeting with clients to distil their challenges into a concise brief, and am constantly presenting back findings to them throughout a project at interim meetings, final presentations and workshops with senior stakeholders. Internally, I am responsible for managing the research project, from planning through to delivery. I manage a team of insight analysts and liaise with data scientists to ensure that our methodology and findings are aligned to the original brief, and that our analysis and insights are always actionable. I look after the overall narrative of the piece, weaving insights into a compelling story, and making strategic recommendations for the business based on our insights. If an interactive client workshop is

required I will also be responsible for putting that together, working with the Client Director and Chief Strategy Officer. In a business development capacity I will often have to write proposals and pitch, and I am also a line manager for several analysts. My day-to-day involves all of these elements through a series of external and internal meetings, and lots of time on PowerPoint!

2. What attributes make someone successful in this job (or what skills are involved in your current role)?

- The ability to think creatively, strategically and outside of the box
- Flexibility, adaptability and not being bound by boxes - there are always last minute client requests and changes to projects!
- Comfortable with ambiguity - able to think on your own feet with little guidance
- Organisational skills and time management - there is an element of stress as you are always delivering against tight deadlines
- Attention to detail is very important
- Growth mind-set and eagerness to learn
- People skills (collaborative, "we not me") - as you are dealing with clients and managing teams on a daily basis, also being comfortable with presenting back ideas and contributing to group discussions
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3. What do you like most about your job?

The exposure I have across a range of senior-level clients, industries and types of business challenges/projects, and the responsibility I was given from the start. I also love my team which has a young, fun, international start-up vibe (we are based in Soho).

4. What are the most challenging aspects (role or sector)?

We are constantly delivering a lot of work against very tight deadlines, so the ability to manage that stress and organise your time is very important. You may also be working on several projects or workstreams simultaneously. Managing client expectations and dealing with a range of senior stakeholders is also a challenge and can be quite political!

5. How did your degree prepare you for your current role (or are there any skills/knowledge you developed which you are using now)?

From a business perspective - none! I think I was really naive about the world of business when I first started out and I used to write up all my reports and presentations in a really academic manner.

However, what was really helpful about my humanities degree was that it challenged me to think critically and empathetically - a skill which is so important for my current job if we are all about understanding consumer behaviour! Throughout my degree I was prompted to ask the right questions, to always dig deeper and ask the "why" and the "so what". I also studied Italian, which has come in useful for research we have carried out in the Italian market.

6. How did you get to where you are now in your career (or what experiences helped you)?

Internships during studies really help so that you are already exposed to the business world by the time you officially enter it. I did a lot of internships as a student, although they weren't necessarily aligned to my current industry. Any experience helps your CV to stand out, and even better if you can tailor those experiences to the career path you want to pursue.

In terms of progression within the company, it's about being assertive and taking opportunities when you get them, asking to be involved in meetings and projects that you want to gain experience in, taking initiative to set up or improve internal processes yourself if you see a gap.

7. What advice would you give to current students about getting into / starting out in your sector? (e.g. relevant experiences, supportive people, necessary education)

You don't need a marketing qualification to work in marketing, but commercial awareness is really important. Read up around the sector, sign up to industry news and resources, research the businesses of the clients of the agencies/consultancies you want to apply to. Internships during studies really help, so you are already exposed to the business world by the time you officially enter it. I did a lot of internships as a student, although they weren't necessarily aligned to my current industry. Any experience helps your CV to stand out, and even better if you can tailor those experiences to the career path you want to pursue.

Negotiate your salary before accepting an offer - I didn't even know this was possible or "allowed" when I first started out, but I really wish I had done so. It's as important as you don't want to have to "play catch up" for the next few years. Make sure your salary expectation is realistic though, and do your research beforehand to ensure that what you are asking for is at the market rate.

8. What is on the horizon within your industry that our students should know about? (positives or negatives)

It's no secret that digital and data are key for the sector. The market research industry is going through massive changes as traditional quant and qual methods (e.g. survey and focus groups) are starting to lose favour to other data sets e.g. first party (e.g. company-owned) and third party (e.g. digital) data. These data sets contain huge amounts of value and insight about consumer behaviour if mined properly. However, every data set has its strengths and limitations so it's important to be wary of this.

9. If you could give a current student one piece of advice on something you wish you'd have known prior to starting your career what would it be?

Things don't go according to plan and that's ok. Be open and flexible to opportunities that come your way. Be ready to adapt as your career path evolves. When I was a student, I had a completely different 10 year life plan laid out for myself and I never imagined I'd be doing what I'm doing right now.

Thank you. If you would like to add any comments to the below, please do so.

Graduate recruitment agencies are really helpful for finding companies and roles you may have never heard of before - definitely make use of them. It's not just enough to look up company websites for vacancy listings or rely on LinkedIn (although the latter is a great resource). Leveraging your network is very important in the industry and job referrals are often the best way into a company.

Stefanie Sword-Williams runs fun, interactive and affordable virtual workshops through her own company F*ck Being Humble. She offers great advice and tips to those starting out in their careers, especially for those looking to enter the media, marketing and advertising industries.

