

## Natalia Kasnakidis, Account Director at VaynerMedia



Course of study	BSc Psychology	Year of graduation	2012
City / Region / Country	London		

**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 am currently an Account Director at VaynerMedia London – a full-service agency that offers integrated services across strategy, creative, production and media. I'm passionate about working with purpose-led organisations and have the privilege of leading the UNICEF account.

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

Communication skills are central to everything we do – whether quickly building rapport internally or with clients, shaping a presentation narrative, delivering feedback, or leading a team. We're constantly collaborating with a wide range of people, each with different roles, priorities and styles. Different circumstances also demand different approaches. Learning to put yourself in other people's shoes, understand how they're thinking and being able to adapt your approach is key.

### Flexibility & a cool head:

The work can be fast-paced, with changing priorities and unexpected challenges. Being able to stay focussed on the outcome but flexible in the approach, and open in your thinking, is crucial to successfully navigate these situations. This means keeping calm under pressure, especially when leading a team. Practice finding possible solutions for every problem – creative thinking isn't just for the creatives.

### Attention to detail:

In Account Management, we have ultimate responsibility for what gets put in front of clients and goes out into the world (on TV, billboards, online etc.). Maintain high standards and be all over the details – whether that's knowing the latest client feedback, spotting typos or checking the legal lines.

### Proactivity:

Take ownership for everything. This does not mean do everything – but be proactive and take responsibility for making sure it gets done. Take initiative and find opportunities to improve the work, or the way we work. As you gain experience, learn to anticipate potential needs, or challenges, and plan accordingly.

## **3. What do you like most about your job?**

I'm fascinated by human behaviour – how counter-intuitive it can be and how insights from psychology can inform effective strategies to change it. I wanted a career where I could apply this and am most fulfilled helping purpose-led organisations create a positive impact in society.

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

Timings and budgets can often be tight. Agencies work hard to deliver the best possible work for their clients – so, at times, the pressure can be intense and the hours long. Look for an agency that values staff wellbeing and learn to set your own boundaries.

In Account Management, you'll often have to navigate different perspectives and conflicting points of view. This is where strong relationships come in – so invest time in developing these, show empathy and pick your battles.

The work can be fast-paced and you'll be juggling multiple priorities at any one time. These can change as the day unfolds, so you'll need to be organised but flexible – and remember to maintain a healthy dose of perspective!

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

I studied psychology, which helped me develop a broad skillset that's been transferrable throughout my career – for example:

- Communication skills: taking lots of information, distilling the key points and shaping the narrative to tell a clear, persuasive story – whether verbally or in writing.
- Behavioural economics: understanding that how we actually behave differs from how we might expect to and learning to question these assumptions.

- Critical thinking: analysing things rather than taking them at face value – and spotting the seed of opportunity in any given problem.

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

- Putting myself outside my comfort zone. From reaching out to senior people in the industry, applying to top grad schemes, speaking in front of my whole agency about an issue I was passionate about, or applying to the Future Leaders Award – every time I did something that scared me, it built my confidence and often opened doors I didn't even know existed!
- Taking charge of my own career plan. I set myself short to medium-term goals – for example, getting into a top graduate scheme, earning a promotion, finding a certain company culture, or building experience in a specific area. At each stage, I learnt more about what was important to me, focussed on what I wanted to develop and planned to make it happen.
- Learning my strengths & values. Reflecting on what I'm good at and what's important to me shaped the choices I made about my career and being clear on this helped me secure the opportunities I wanted.
- Seeking guidance & feedback – and actively trying to apply it. People don't always feel comfortable proactively sharing feedback, so ask how you could better support them. Don't wait for your review to learn something you could have addressed 3-6 months earlier!

**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're not picking a career forever! Start somewhere, get experience under your belt and learn as you go. Identify the transferrable skills & strengths you can use going forward.
- Build your network, in a way that feels natural. 'Networking' can feel awkward or forced. Instead connect with people who share your passions – for me, that's driving Diversity & Inclusion in the industry. Focussing first on how you can help others may also change your perspective.
- Identify your strengths & values: This takes time but is so important, especially in today's competitive landscape. What's most important to you about the kind of work you do, the environment you work in and the people you work with? "The Squiggly Career" by Helen Tupper & Sarah Ellis is a great place to start.

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

Our industry is all about capturing attention. This is continually shifting as the world around us evolves – so understanding how and where our audience are choosing to consume content will inform the way we execute.

COVID-19 has impacted many brand's budgets and their choice of media channels – with uncertainty potentially accelerating the trend towards flexible, dynamic formats over the more traditional, like print and TV.

**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?**

Just because someone has more experience than you, don't assume that means they always know better. You will have something to offer, even if that's a fresh pair of eyes or perspective – speak up and ask questions.

