

## Ilse Visser (30)

STUDY YEAR: 2009–2011

IS: Owner @ Ilse Visser Proj. Man. & Bus. Dev.

HOME: House in Purmerend

HOUSEHOLD: In a relationship

DREAM JOB AS KID: Pediatrician

RIDE: Volvo V60 but mostly public transport



As a kid, I was fascinated by healthcare. I knew I wanted to become a doctor: a pediatrician to be precise. Unfortunately, I could not achieve this goal, as my language score was better than my math score. I had to switch directions. Coming from an entrepreneurial family, I decided that business would become my new focus. Hoping that, some day, I would start my own company.

I started my bachelor degree in International Business & Management in Groningen. The best part was the exchange in Taipei, Taiwan, for half a year. Learning Mandarin, meeting people from all over the world, and living in another country enriched me. During my master degree in Strategy & Innovation (now SIM), I also became board member of [UniPartners Groningen](#). Running a business with other students for one year, strengthened my feeling to start my own company one day. It also made really clear how important it is to build a strong professional network, to learn from and help each other further.

I enjoyed the practical business experience I acquired at UniPartners. I decided to not write my thesis just sitting in the university library, but do an internship at [Schiphol Group](#). It resulted in a project with a senior airport architect. We developed a new strategy and vision on how the terminal should look like in 10-15 years, taking into account the vision of multiple stakeholders, technological developments, and innovation trends. Great first job experience and start of my career!

Next, I worked for a large-sized family company as international business developer. Building the international activities from scratch was exciting and it felt like a start-up. Travelling to Turkey, Sweden, and going on trade missions with the Dutch government to India to research business opportunities, were honestly just awesome. Especially, considering my interest in international business.

After three years, I started to work at a corporate party again: [Deloitte Innovation](#). There I got the opportunity to dive into the Dutch innovation ecosystem. A very vibrant and interesting world! Still, I was sure that someday I should start my own company, but I still didn't know the 'what' and 'when' exactly.

The big question here was (maybe you'll recognize this?): when will I have enough experience to start my own business? Well, after a lot of thinking, I concluded that the 'right' moment will probably never come, but that I should just DO it. So that's what I did. This adventure started during the summer of 2017, when I started as project manager and business developer. I'm proud that I had the guts to do it and that I have already finished my first assignment, and started with the second. Of course, it is exciting and sometimes really frightening at the same time, but the latter is not a legitimate reason to not follow your dream.

So, what about my wish as a little child to become a pediatrician? Since caring for people and smart healthcare solutions still intrigue me, my ultimate goal is to develop a product or service in this area but then for the elderly. Although I have no direct background in this, my passion drives me to now familiarize myself with this sector.

Feel free to reach out to me on [LinkedIn](#) or via my [company page](#).

## Merel Koppen (27)

STUDY YEAR: 2013–2015

IS: Product Manager E-commerce @ PostNL

HOME: Apartment in Amsterdam

HOUSEHOLD: Single

DREAM JOB AS KID: Singer

RIDE: Ideally a Tesla, currently a bike



During my bachelor studies, I joined the [EBF Board](#). As the Public Affairs and Study Officer (since then, I never gained such a fancy job title), I was responsible for the organization of the [EBF Conference](#) and the supervision of several committees, but probably most important, for keeping an 'organisation' (the EBF) afloat for one year, together with my team. During this year, I experienced the things that gave me energy. It was not (as I thought in advance) setting up complete new things, but, improving collaborations, events and processes: Making things work better. I started thinking about 'how' to make these changes, and although I gained some knowledge on this topic during my bachelor BA and minor in Psychology, I felt the need to gain more specific insights. Luckily, there was SIM...

During SIM, I got in touch with these specific insights by looking at 'innovation' from different angles on different strategic levels. I enjoyed the fact that during the courses, this was combined with many business examples and cases, because, in the end, that's where we're most likely to work after graduating! I decided to pause my master studies to gain some real time work experience by doing an internship at the [Embassy of the Netherlands](#) in Australia. At the department of Economics and Trade, I got the chance to work on a broad variety of topics, but also did what SIM students do best: I organised an *Innovation Event* at the Embassy for Business, University and Government participants.

Lesson 1: I recommend you to gain some work experience before you graduate. It enables you to get a realistic feeling of what working life is about. It also makes you think about: Is this the type of organisation I would like to work for? What elements do I find important in a job?

During my traineeship at [ORMIT](#), I was given the possibility, to find answers to those type of questions. In an intensive 2-year personal leadership and development program, I was confronted with the person I am, and the person I want to be, as a future manager and person. I gained working experience by doing consultancy assignments at Rabobank, ABN AMRO, Hilco Capital and PostNL Pakketten and with every job, I better understood the elements that my 'ideal' job consists of. Lesson 2: Realize that when you start at a new company that the people around you indeed may have more experience or expertise, but do not forget that your ability to observe, analyze and identify opportunities is at least as good, if not better, than theirs.

During my job at [PostNL Pakketten](#) as a Product Manager E-commerce, I realized how much value this mindset can deliver. By asking 'stupid' questions, I made myself useful during the first weeks. Of course, there's more to the job; I am currently at a point where I am working on gaining specific knowledge and becoming an expert in my workfield to be able to engage with all stakeholders and stay ahead of the competition in a fast moving e-commerce environment. Still, within this job, making things better and setting up new opportunities is what gets me out of bed in the morning. Because, I strongly believe that with a creative mind, it's ALWAYS possible to innovate!

Want to know more or contact me? Please do so via [LinkedIn](#).