

Sebastian Phijffer (26)

STUDY YEAR: 2015–2016

IS: Innovation Consultant @ KPMG

HOME: Amsterdam

HOUSEHOLD: Single

DREAM JOB: Becoming Willy Wortel (inventor)

RIDE: Ford Fiesta



I will take you through the life of an innovation consultant, working in a big corporate environment. I am Sebastian Phijffer, and was raised in a small village at the border of Limburg and Belgium; [Mheer](#). If you think that a village like Mheer is incapable of fostering the bright minds of the next generation innovators, you are completely right. To achieve my goals, I had to travel across the country to Groningen to study the Master of Strategic Innovation Management at the RUG!

I find innovation so much fun because of the vast amount of variety that this subject brings. I like to challenge the status quo using the latest technologies. After finishing my Masters at the RUG, I did what I recommend every soul to do when receiving their diploma: travel the world. There is simply no substitute for experiencing new cultures and a couple of near-death experiences to set your life priorities straight.

Once I returned to the Netherlands, one of my best friends worked at [KPMG](#) as a IT consultant. My first impression of KPMG was that it would be an old accountant club where the dust would permanently settle on the shoulders of an average 50-year old bookkeeper. Can you imagine my face once I heard that the average employee age is between 25 to 30 years? As mentioned before, variety is very important to me. The job as IT consultant enabled me to visit a large range of clients in different work environments, with different colleagues. Still, being an IT consultant, was not exactly what I wanted. Thus, I started my quest to become an innovation consultant at KPMG. It did not take long before I got into contact with the innovation team and three months later I switched departments to Innovation Advisory. This department consists of three pillars; Innovation Consulting, Digital Ledger Services and Payments.

[Innovation Consulting](#) is primarily involved with helping clients via crowdsourcing to come up with innovative ideas and help clients bring the most promising ideas to life. The [Digital Ledger Services](#) team assists clients with, for example, realizing their blockchain ambitions; the [Payments Team](#) advises financial institutions with respect to the latest regulations (e.g. PSD2) and payment innovations, such as Instant Payments.

If you want to become an Innovation Consultant at a big four company (KPMG, Deloitte, EY, PwC), I will have to introduce you to your new best friend: Powerpoint. Everything deliverable ranging from proposals to final reports are perfected to the pixel in Powerpoint. Most client engagements consists of workshops, where you involve the client through various interactive exercises and discussions, frequently with the use of big posters.

The thing I love the most about my job is the wide variety in engagements, the young energized group of colleagues and the ability to participate in the largest innovation events in Europe; such as the Blockchain Innovation Conference.

If you want to know more about my job, feel free to contact me via [LinkedIn](#).

Milan Odijk (26)

STUDY YEAR: 2015–2017

IS: Operations Manager @ Westwing

HOME: Apartment in Munich, Germany

HOUSEHOLD: Single

DREAM JOB AS KID: Pilot

RIDE: U-Bahn



My initial reason for starting my bachelor's degree in International Business was my fascination about how these large companies deal with all the (unexpected) issues when operating abroad. During my bachelors, I had the opportunity to join the International Business Research (IBR) to China where I conducted an elaborate research on the Chinese e-commerce for [Ranpak](#). This is where I realized that strategic decisions and positioning is something I found particularly interesting; that's why I wanted to pursue the master SIM. During this Master's degree, I also did an internship on the strategy development department of [CRH](#), a global company offering building materials, to get some hands-on experience.

After graduation, the question I think every student has, popped up: "what's next?". As SIM prepares you for so many different fields, the decision was not that easy. Consultancy seemed appealing as it allows you to see so many aspects of different industries. However, I thought I would lack the direct touch with the daily business of a company, which I missed during my time as an intern at CRH. Working at a startup therefore particularly appealed to me as it allows you to truly shape a company. Having also written my Master thesis on Innovative Business Model in an international context, the decision was relatively easy when [Westwing](#), a Home and Living company with about 1500 employees, approached me to join the newly set-up team in Munich for the Dutch and Belgian market.

Working as the Operations Manager for the Netherlands and Belgium, my main responsibility is the full supply chain management for these countries. This job fitted my needs perfectly; from the very beginning, I was able to kick-off long-term projects to attain long-term improvements (something which I knew I enjoyed doing) whilst also on a daily level being responsible for a variety of tasks, ranging from data analysis, preparing inventory takings, to negotiations, and anything in between. Although supply chain management might not be first thing that would come to your mind when talking about innovation, the way we utilize the supply chain and how we can improve its efficiency and effectiveness require creativity and innovation. As Westwing sources products and campaigns from all over Europe, whilst utilizing a zero-stock model, it is a great innovative business model that makes use of a shopping club concept. What is particularly great is that any improvement or innovation we initiate, has a direct and measurable effect. This can be a small improvement in a tool, but also certainly long-term improvements in the supply chain as a whole.

I can highly recommend any student not to just travel the world, but also to *work* at different places. It can be inspiring and informative to work with people from different cultures and nations.

Do you want to know more? Feel free to contact me via my [LinkedIn](#).