

Olivia Kallwass (29)

STUDY YEAR: 2015–2017

IS: Project Manager @ Interlutions

HOME: Cologne, Germany

HOUSEHOLD: Two cats and a boyfriend

DREAM JOB AS KID: Fashion designer

RIDE: Bike



In the past, I have many times been confronted with situations that left me with a feeling of “So...what do I do now?!”. I had this feeling after I finished high school, after finishing my Bachelor’s, after quitting my first Master’s in Germany, after finishing SIM, and then again one year ago. I am not going to bore you with all the details of my almost 30 years of living, so I will focus on the years after finishing my SIM master at the beginning of 2017. I promise, there is a happy end to all of this!

After graduating, I did not have any plans or wishes concerning my next steps other than that I really wanted to move to Amsterdam. So thankfully, fellow SIM alumni Carolin introduced me to a major software corporation located in Amsterdam, where we both started working as account managers. During that time, I realized that (1) I did not really like living there, (2) I did not really like working for a major corporation and (3) I did not really like working in sales. So, I was actually relieved when our department was shut down in August 2018 as a result of an internal reorganization. Again, I stood at the crossroads, thinking to myself: “what do I do now?” The next few months I spent moving back to my beloved hometown Cologne to be closer to family and to figure out what to do next. If you have worked before, and everyone around you is working, while you are at home doing nothing but being unemployed with just your two cats, it is hard to find your way back. So, I did what any reasonable person in my position would do: I started working for yet another major corporation at yet another sales job. It did not come as a surprise that I did not get what I wanted, so I quit the job after 1.5 months. As a reader, you might start to wonder about “what happened to the happy end?”

I decided to go back to the thing that I like doing most: being creative. So that’s why I studied Business Administration (just kidding, who would do that?!). Some fellow SIM-ers are quite aware of my passion and have been subjected to multiple of my Photoshop experiments during study time in the UB. To get back to the topic: creativity, that’s my thing. I decided to steer clear of any job that has any relatedness to “corporate”. Broadening my job search horizon has been the best decision of my life. I now work as a project manager at [Interlutions](#), a digital agency based in Cologne. Here, I can combine my passion for creativity with my love for everything that is “number” or “innovation” related. In my job, I am responsible for the conception, management and implementation as well as the controlling of projects in the areas of digital and online marketing, content management and software development. I work closely together with our customers and our incredible design and development teams, creating innovative masterpieces for great brands on a daily business.

To sum up, here is something I wish someone would have told me a few years back: 1: you do not have to have everything figured out; 2: comparing your path with others is not going to help; and, 3: it is totally fine to just take *your* time to figure out *your* life.

If you want to contact me and chat about failures, happy ends, cats or working at an agency, feel free to do so via [LinkedIn](#).

Dustin A. Wiktor-Steffens (26)

STUDY YEAR: 2017–2018

IS: Chief Digital Officer @ ConexBird

HOME: Hamburg, Germany

HOUSEHOLD: In a relationship

DREAM JOB AS KID: Product designer

RIDE: Bike, train, plane



My father used to say, “If you love your job, you will never have to go to work again.” Easier said than done, but true; after all, you’ll spend most of your life working. Thus, I spent a lot of time thinking about my future, but since the worst decision is indecision, I just acted and tried – sooner rather than later.

In Germany, I studied at a university of applied sciences and took on leading positions in a nonprofit organization. Both experiences equipped me with the abilities and tools to work as a management consultant in the infrastructure industry right after graduation. Firsthand I became aware of the imbalance between smart solutions and their inappropriate implementation. Against this backdrop, I chose to pursue a master’s degree in change management at the University of Groningen. After my year in the Netherlands, which was a rich learning experience, I was looking for a more profound intercultural challenge. Therefore, I took part in a second master’s degree in Economics in Shanghai. In addition to an ongoing research project with the University of Groningen, the cultural experience in China, many trips and of course the master’s program itself, I became increasingly involved with a young company called [ConexBird](#). ConexBird aims to revolutionize the container shipping industry using vibration data and machine learning algorithms to detect and accurately predict container damages. Today, I have the privilege of working with very talented managers, engineers and programmers. Apart from working for a successful and fast-growing company, my work is also interesting because it is very entrepreneurial and varied.

The relevance of this industry is clear: 90% of what you see around you was sent in a container. I like my job responsibilities and the creative leeway I have to do something about the protection of our climate. While container shipping is much more energy-efficient than other transport modes, the sheer number of containers still contributes significantly to pollution.

Around one-third of all transported containers are empty to be loaded at their destination. This number is unnecessarily high. Shipping lines often do not know which empty containers will be unusable. ConexBird’s technology can help detect damaged containers in seconds, removing the need to order an excessive number of containers, which ultimately reduces greenhouse emissions. This is one of many use cases for this technology, making its economic and environmental potential seemingly unlimited.

My advice to the students: The most important thing for me is to have a healthy curiosity: to be interested in all sorts of things and to learn about them. Make sure you get plenty of input through books, podcasts, videos, events, and discussions. Gathering knowledge will open doors for you as you become more interesting to others. When they open – no matter how intimidating – you have to ask yourself, “What’s the cost of not trying?” Feel free to contact me via [LinkedIn](#).