

Geography at work

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Sophie graduated from the University of Manchester in 2012 after studying Geography (BSc Hons) and Commercial Project Management (MSc). After graduation, Sophie joined global engineering consultancy firm Atkins and has worked across multiple sectors, before transferring to the Middle East to work as a Management Consultant in the energy sector in Abu Dhabi.



Please give us a brief outline of your current role and tell us a little more about the company you work for.

I am currently a Management Consultant specialising in project management for Atkins. I joined on a graduate scheme in 2012, and have since had the opportunity to move to the Middle East, where I am currently based. As a consultant, I interact with various clients and act as a project support officer, business analyst, and project manager. I am currently focussing on organisational design and workforce planning. This involves reviewing the organisational structure of a

company and supporting them in developing a sustainable plan for resources for the next five years.

There are multiple inputs of data that you need to review and understand to give a comprehensive workforce plan. It takes time and a good understanding of the data to create a plan that works.

What did you particularly enjoy about your degree course? What skills have been useful in your career to date?

I found geography was a unique and comprehensive course. It had evolved from what I had been taught at school into a subject with depth and variety, every year the modules were different. It is rewarding to understand the deeper meaning behind both quantitative and qualitative data. I learnt how to think outside the box, to understand the source of the information, how it can connect to other material and ultimately see more than the words or numbers on a page. This new way of looking at the information enhanced my critical thinking and problem-solving abilities and was one of the key skills I have applied to my current career.

Why do you think it is important for geographers to develop excellent quantitative skills?

Data analysis is an activity I regularly come across within my work. Project timelines, finances, or generic reviews of employee profiles. At university you have the ability to grow and develop quantitative skills and I think it's important for geographers to recognise it is a skill set that you will always need. If data is manipulated and presented incorrectly, it has a negative impact on any analysis.

How do you make use of quantitative skills in your current role?

Currently, I mostly use data presentation and data interpretation. Data presentation sounds simple, but it is an underestimated skill set. It is difficult to ensure that you are communicating the correct message. The

