

Chipo Meke

Management Consultant

**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Management Consultant

Organisation: KMPG

Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I have a BSc (Hons) Geography with Business Management degree from Queen Mary University of London. When I was picking the course I wanted to study, I didn't have a career in mind but I felt that geography would help to give me a broad range of skills and knowledge for a number of potential careers. Many graduate programmes are now more focused on the skills and experience you have as opposed to your actual degree which meant that my focus was on picking a course in a subject I really enjoyed.

I am fortunate that I successfully managed to gain a place on the Tech Consulting graduate scheme at KMPG without doing any internships/summer vacation schemes but it was really tough! In my final year of university, I started applying for graduate schemes early in September in a variety of industries that interested me. However, I was very determined on working in management or tech consulting.

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

Although I lacked having internship or summer experience, I had extensive retail experience from working at the Apple Store. I worked there for over two years in a sales and a technical role which really helped me to develop key skills needed for my current role – communication, problem solving, working independently and within teams.

I was also involved in the Geography Society as the Marketing Officer at university which helped to demonstrate that I was a well-rounded candidate in my application. It is really important to show to employers that you are academic, sociable and have relevant experience – a pitfall for some is focusing purely on academic achievement!

What do you do as part of your role?

Sometimes I still wonder what I do and how to explain it to other people and I've done this for almost three years! My role is project-based and our clients are in the B2B and B2C sector. My team focuses on Finance Transformation programmes which entails helping clients to change their finance function in multiple ways. For example, one of my recent projects involved helping a client with understanding which other finance processes could be outsourced to their existing Shared Service Centre (SSC) to help them to reduce operating costs.

I am currently working on a project in a finance function to help assess their data maturity and understand ways they can improve the quality of their data for their budgeting, planning and forecasting processes.

As a graduate, you will not be leading pieces when you start but you are expected to get stuck in helping to deliver the project!

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like the variety of my role – sometimes you can

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get really lucky and get a good project that you enjoy and... sometimes you don't! However, the beauty of consulting is that projects (usually) have an end date so you have the opportunity to do different roles and work with various clients which gives you exposure that you would not necessarily get working in industry.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?

I would highly recommend trying to get an internship/summer vacation scheme. I was not able to do one as I needed to keep my part-time job whilst I studied but these are so useful to give you experience and get a step ahead of other graduates.

Make sure to get work experience (e.g. part-time job) and get involved in societies or sports whilst at university – it is important to have good grades but it is also important to show you have other achievements that set you apart from everyone else.

If you are able to, speak to people within your chosen career – ask people who have a similar level of experience to you as they will be able to give you a true understanding of what your day to day role will entail. Networking is everything and these connections may be able to refer you onto a graduate scheme.

Finally, many will apply to the Big Four (KPMG, EY, Deloitte and PWC) and the Big Three (McKinsey, Bain and BCG). Definitely apply to them, but also consider other smaller boutique firms which can provide great experiences too!

Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?

I chose geography because it was a subject I really enjoyed at school and it is a subject that is intertwined into many aspects of life and the world. I knew it would enable me to learn many skills and experiences that would be transferrable when applying for roles. I was unsure about my career and I wanted a degree that would enable me to apply for any type of role I was interested in.

You should pick geography as it has many opportunities for learning technical skills, developing report writing and public speaking

skills. Some courses, mine included, offer field trips abroad which are a great way of learning about another country or city and the various issues these areas face (social, economic etc.). This enables geography students to translate such experiences into work and life scenarios as you have a greater understanding of how impacts can change circumstances within organisations or people.

One of a series of profiles of staff and students from Queen Mary University of London.

