

CASE STUDY

Olivia Sweeney

Creative Buyer Aroma Chemicals at Lush



How did you get to where you are now?

For as long as I can remember I have cared about the environment. I have always wanted to look after it, and if possible, improve the state that it is in. My abilities in science and maths allowed me to explore the more technical side of this passion.

I studied a broad range of GCSEs and A levels because of I had a broad range of interests and was not sure exactly what I wanted to do in the future.

Luckily when looking through prospectuses I found Chemical Engineering and my subject specialties matched. I thought that this was a broad enough

subject that would equip me to make a tangible change in the field of sustainability.

Throughout my undergraduate and master's degree I focused my studies on green and sustainable courses, undertaking internships in carbon capture, energy neutrality and biofuels.

On graduating I started my role at Lush and have been working there for two years now. There I have improved my knowledge of the many factors that impact the environment and have helped Lush to embrace technical solutions to these problems.

What challenges do you face on a day to day basis?

With the current climate crisis, working to help improve

sustainability or create a positive impact on the environment can seem overwhelming. This a big task to tackle because there is more than one cause and your small actions can feel insignificant. It can be hard to stay motivated, but working in a place and with people that really care helps.

Day to day there is always so much to do and not enough time to do it! Day to day there is always so much to do and as a business Lush is constantly evolving! My role as a creative buyer often requires me to make important decisions. This is where the problem-solving skills of an engineer are invaluable, my education gives me the confidence to piece information together, and make the decision to the best of my knowledge and ability. This is where the problem-solving skills of an engineer are invaluable.



"I like to solve lots of the small problems that lead to solving the big overall aim."

"For as long as I can remember I have cared about the environment."



What is the biggest difference you noticed between work and university in terms of engineering?

Work is rarely a project with a clear beginning and end date; often deadlines, or targets change or are unclear. You quite often feel like things are not quite finished - but if you have done your best with what you have at your disposal that is what is important.

You are not constantly doing 'engineering', but this doesn't mean you aren't using the skill sets of an engineer.

Real life example of engineering applied to your work.

I use engineering skill sets all day, every day. The ability to communicate in both a technical and social sense is key to my role and something I have developed throughout my studies. Problem-solving has also been key.

The technical skills needed vary depending on what I am working on. You don't have to have an engineering degree to do my job but the projects I work on do require much more of the traditional skill set.

The biggest step in a project is making decisions and actions from limited or incomplete information. Piecing together odd bits of information, technical data, and targets to build the bigger picture is always part of my job.

And obviously spreadsheets and large spoonfuls of maths!

How do you approach these problems?

I always breakdown problems into manageable chunks otherwise things can very quickly become overwhelming.

I like to solve lots of the small problems that lead to solving the big overall aim. Taking care over the small details means the solution is likely to be stronger and more resilient.

I always go in knowing there is not perfect solution. Going in with a pragmatic approach means that I avoid disappointment.

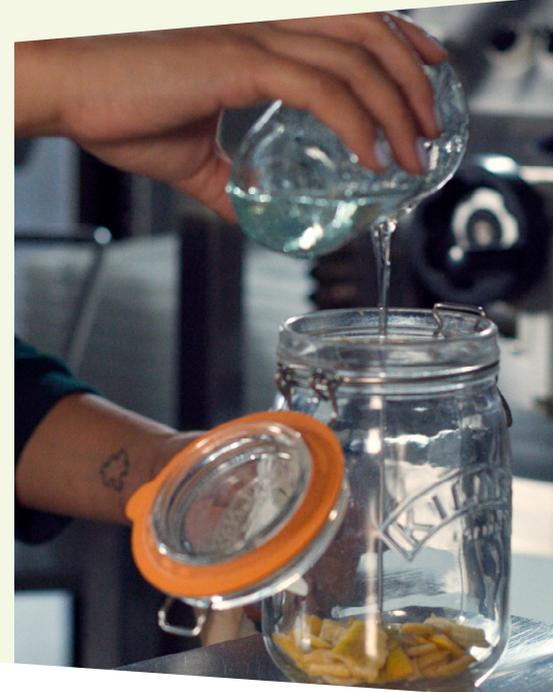
What would your advice be to someone who aspires to be like you?

It is great to want to be like someone but don't try and be them! You, and the differences you bring, are invaluable.

I didn't always know what I wanted to do as a job, I just knew what I was interested in. Because I was interested that meant it was fun for me to do things in my spare time that helped me gain the necessary knowledge and get my job.

Work hard, but also work smart. Don't be afraid to question the traditional and standard way of doing things.

Don't get caught up wondering where you want to be in 10 years' time. It is great to have a career plan and a source of motivation, but it is not the most important thing. Make sure that you are learning and taking every opportunity you have now, because that will help you for the future.



Royal Academy of Engineering
Prince Philip House, 3 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5DG

Tel: +44 (0)20 7766 0600
www.raeng.org.uk

Registered charity number 293074



**MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS
FOUNDATION**