

INTERVIEW: EFCM- MBM FORMER STUDENT MARIELA AIRES

Mariela Aires, EFCM-MBM former student shares her experience in the 2006-2008 edition of the program and the development of her professional career

1) How did you get to know about the program and how would you describe your experience as an EFCM-MBM student?

*I always wanted to study perfumery, following **my passion since I was 12 years old**. Initially I've been looking for a course in this field throughout my time at University and then, searching the Internet, I came across the website of ISIPCA and I discovered they were offering the EFCM program. I really liked the fact that it was a 2 years course covering both technical and business aspects and I decided to apply for it.*

*It was a great experience! Besides the subjects, the content of the course, and everything that has been covered, I must say that I **also gained a lot as a person** because of the diversity of people attending it. You really learn a lot just from living with people coming from all over the world who are in the same or very similar situation. I really consider it an **experience of a lifetime**, nothing I have experienced since then has been so strong.*

2) How did your professional career start?

*Before I entered the EFCM program, I already had some experience in a fragrance house on the analytical side. At the end of the course, I was trying to find some internship or job opportunities in Europe but at that time I only had the student visa so it was really difficult. That's why I **ended up going back to Brazil** and I started working as a **Junior Perfumer and Evaluator for a small fragrance house**. The company was based in Chile but they had new labs in Brazil, they were basically establishing themselves. I worked with them for three years, living alternately three months in Brazil and other three in Chile. Then I decided to leave Brazil again and, after applying for different jobs in Europe, I **finally moved to Liverpool** where I started to work on the **hair care division of Unilever**. I worked as an Evaluator and I had to deal with global brands like TRESemmé and Sunsilk. This position, in such a large company, was much more strategic and here I **really needed all that I have learnt from the EFCM –MBM courses** since I had to deal with both strategic and highly technical aspects.*

3) What about your current job?

*After spending 4 years in Unilever, I've started to work as **Air care Fragrance Manager for RB**, also known as Reckitt Benckiser. The fragrance team was starting to grow and more recently - since last June - I got the newly opened position of **Fragrance and Flavors Innovations Manager**, which is a lot more exploratory than the conventional Fragrance Manager job. My role consists of **finding new fragrance and flavors technologies** for our brands which cover different areas and **making new partnerships**. As most of the companies, we obviously have a core list of suppliers we work with, but we also make contacts with smaller suppliers and adjacent companies that have differentiated technologies, services or devices related to fragrance and flavors.*

4) Which teaching modules have been the most useful for the job you are doing?

I would say **Strategic Management of the Enterprises** because professor Kumar was the one that made us think the most about the strategic side of companies and intercultural differences, which are very important to acknowledge when you make business with people from different companies and countries.

Then, I've also learnt a lot from the **Business Plan** module held by professor Boesso, which required us to create from scratch our business plan, developing and presenting it. I would say that these two courses were the most remarkable for me and I've been using a lot the concepts I have learnt ever since.

5) Which are the most pleasant memories of your experience?

I have lots. One of them is surely **the Italian classes** we had with Silvio and the party that he organized with his family. **The short trip we made to Villa Sandi**, where Prosecco is made, is another very pleasant memory of the time spent in Padova. I also remember we had a **Christmas Dinner** and professor Favotto and his wife received us at their house, it was a very nice moment.

Finally, I have very **good memories of my classmates**. When I lived in Brazil and Chile I managed to see again one of the guy in my class, Francisco, who is Chilean. I met his wife and I know they have two kids, even if I haven't seen them for a while. Then, I've been in touch with my ex flat mate, Gauri, and a few times we also travelled together with our husbands. I know that three of my former classmates are working for Givaudan in Dubai, they see each other and they are quite close together as well. Last year I also went to Fulya's wedding in Turkey so I managed to see a lot of our friends coming from everywhere, it was really good!

6) What are your tips for students or juniors looking forward to pursuing a career similar to you?

At first I would suggest to make the most of the course while you are attending it and- since the industry is not huge - spend time **building relationships**. I would also recommend to **start applying early** when you are still a student, even if it's difficult because at first you don't know exactly how to approach companies or what role you are aiming for. In any case, don't be afraid to enter a new position and then learn just on the way, **stay flexible while following your passions**. Many people think that staying flexible means not following what they want, while for me it means don't feel like you have to stick to what you thought you wanted to be. Finally, I would surely suggest to **enjoy your career**...for me it's really hard to believe ten years have gone by so fast!!