

INTERVIEW: MBM FORMER STUDENT ELENA LONGATO

Elena Longato, who attended the MBM program in 2013, shares her experience and the development of her professional career as Brand Manager at Gottardo

1. How did you get to know about the MBM program and why did you decide to attend it?

*I graduated in Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Technologies at the University of Padova and my thesis supervisor was professor Alessandra Semenzato, who introduced me to this program. I attended the meeting organized to present the Master and **I was really impressed by the extremely positive feedbacks**. I remember I thought: "Are they real?!" Now, after many years, I can confirm they were.*

*I finally decided to attend the Master because it was focused on something concrete and pragmatic, strictly connected with the working world. I was interested in the cosmetics industry but with my university background, I felt I was competent only to work in a laboratory. I wanted to discover something more and the Master could provide me with the necessary knowledge to **complete my educational background** and with the **adequate skills and competencies to work in a company**.*

2. How would you describe your experience as an MBM student?

*It was a very intense experience, a real full immersion from morning to evening five days a week but it was not heavy at all, time flew so fast I wish it had lasted longer. I would do it again immediately. The decision to attend a Master, which requires an economic investment, is never easy to take; however, once I started and I saw the high quality of teachers I realize it was worth it. The assistance from the office was also remarkable. Last but not least, the Master has been really useful for my professional career since **the ideal candidate for the position I held** should possess **technical skills** as well as competences in the field of **marketing and economics**. I can say my expectations have been fulfilled.*



3. How did your professional career start?

I wanted to work for a cosmetics company and my internship search was initially focused on that direction. Then, during the Master I had the chance to meet **Rosana Fabbiani, management consultant for Gottardo**, a company specialized in the sale of house and personal care products. I had an interview at the company and the following day they offered me an internship. Even if it was not exactly what I was looking for, **the environment was very challenging and I was sure I would have learnt a lot.**

I had the chance to get a privileged position, I was supported but I did not have a direct supervisor except for the director of the company. I was completely autonomous for better and for worse because you can test yourself but it's easier to make mistakes!

After the first 6 months, **I really fall in love with the job** because it **is very challenging and diversified**. When they asked me to stay, I obviously said yes. I have so much to do inside the company that I would never want to go away. I really like the working environment, they invest a lot on young people and there is a very low average age; as a consequence, people have willingness to learn and new ideas. I also became very attached to our external consultant, Rosana, she has always supported us in all these years and she became almost a second mum to me. When I started, expectations were not so high, but then I discovered that such a kind of company offers a wide range of possibilities since you have to take care of many different aspects.

4. What your current job consist of exactly?

I work as a **Brand Manager** in the Private Label office: we **decide the name, the positioning and the range of products under our brand** for house and personal care markets. We are retailers - so we don't produce - but we manage every single aspect including **quality check, prices, sales analysis, market surveys and communication** via magazines, Facebook, brochures and so on. We are expanding a lot, we have more than 10 lines under our brand and we are going to create new ones. Our office also became more structured: I started alone, then we hired a copywriter who takes care of texts contents and another colleague who supports me in all the other activities. A fourth colleague will join us soon to manage the graphic aspects even if we will keep to be supported by external graphics, commercial and communication offices. Besides scientific and economic competences, the position also includes human aspects since we need to get in touch with all the other offices and creative ones, which are essential in a field like marketing.

5. Which teaching module of the Master has been the most useful?

I would say Marketing Management and Customer Behavior held by professor Nancy Wong who provides me with all the basic preparation to undertake my tasks effectively. **Sometimes, I even look back at my old books with all the notes** in order to develop the new lines according to the knowledge and the advices included. I just feel the need to slow down instead of following the business routine, which is extremely fast; I think that it is more productive in order to **define an effective and successful strategy**.

6. What is your most pleasant memory?

The **multicultural environment of the class**, which allows you to discover and better understand different realities, lifestyles, ways of thinking and acting. We were very close and **after several years we are still in touch**: we talk regularly and we invite each other to weddings; there are a lot of weddings this years, including mine in September! We have a Facebook group and a very active Whatsapp group that we use to share playful moments, wishes, pictures, videos and, sometimes, even to ask working related questions. If we were all Italian there could be competitiveness issues but since we are all working in different countries we help each other in a more natural and spontaneous way.



7. Do you remember some amusing episodes happened with other students?

Sure! I joined the EFCM group during the second year in Padova with other three Italian students. At the first final presentation, we arrived in class dressed like every day while all EFCM students used to dress very elegantly, wearing suit and tie, dress, high heels.. We had no idea about it! I remember we asked them if they were going to a wedding and they had forgot to invite us!! From then on, we also started to dress very professionally during final exams and presentations!



*Then, I remember that for the **Business Plan activity** I was in a group with three Indian students and I discovered they had a way of working completely different from mine! **We spent a whole night awake working on our project** at their home, eating flying slices of pizza at 2 am! Next morning we arrived in class very tired and with dark under-eye circles because of the lack of sleep and we also discovered we would have been evaluated by more people than expected. We laugh a lot when we think about that terrible night!! I remember that when we were asked to do the Business Plan we thought we would never be able to do it. There was a feeling of disorientation and panic but in the end, **when you manage to do it, the satisfaction is something incredible.***

8. What are your tips for students and juniors looking forward to pursuing this career path?

*I think the world of private label is not very well know while **it's a significant market and it's going to expand further**, I recently went to a trade fair in Bologna and the data are remarkable. **The weight of private labels varies widely across the world**; for instance, they are very strong in Germany while they still have to develop in other countries like India. In any case, the role of Brand Manager is extremely versatile and adaptable to different contexts: enterprises, pharmaceutical companies and so on. I would say this kind of position is suitable for curious people and loves doing different tasks. Every day is never the same, you have different stimuli and the range of activities you have to take care of is so complex and long that it's impossible to get bored.*