

## **Expert Interview I with Connie Lowman, Media Research and Insight Executive at Good-Loop**

**Including |** thoughts on the future of data collection, relishing in digital ignorance, and having one foot in order and the other foot in chaos

>> *Connie guest curated Strands on June 15, 2022. [Read it here.](#)*

### **Tell us a little bit about yourself and what keeps you busy. How did you end up doing what you're doing today?**

My name is Connie Lowman, and I recently graduated with a distinction in MA in Advertising from the University of the Arts, London. For my final major project (think dissertation but less conventional...or boring), I spent about nine months exploring the future of data collection beyond the extinction of Google's third-party cookies in 2023. As I learned more about the existing and proposed landscape, I began to build a pretty morbid picture of where we appear to be heading, which led to the following research question: how can brands build trust with generation z while serving personalized ads in a post-cookie and post-privacy world?

Well, arguably they can't while the relentless third-party cookies stalk consumers around the internet. Permutive found that while 60% of consumers were aware companies are buying and selling their data, "less than 20% of people are comfortable with this". Now this paired with a measly 23% of companies having a formal post-cookie strategy reported at Advertising Week Europe, firms wanting to appease these consumers are going to be open to new approaches of reaching and building partnerships with them. So, arguably, the advertising industry is at a turning point, where trust adopts an invaluable status in the post-cookie world to help rebalance the digital value exchange.

For me, the best way to approach my research into possible solutions was to speculate around how different technologies and companies could address new opportunities from the perspective of both consumers and brands, placing purpose at its core. And hey, that's how my path crossed with Rosie and Faris at Genius Steals! As advisors to our Master's projects, I have received great support for Social Bubble - my speculative start-up. This led to some really great conversations with



some really great people about how Social Bubble, in Faris' own words, "might even help reinvent digital advertising as we know it". As a brief introduction, Social Bubble sought to bridge the gap between advertisers with consensual post-cookie ad personalization wishes while allowing browser users to get rewarded for exerting control over data sharing. Social Bubble is about building allies, allowing the brands you trust to tailor personalized content toward you, consensually, while helping you grow your good in supporting causes you feel passionately about. Now wouldn't that be cool?

I'm now super excited to say I'm applying all the inquisitive energy that went into Social Bubble, into my Media Research and Insight Executive position at Good-Loop. I'm part of the team aiming to turn advertising into a force for good, by building more meaningful connections between brands and people. The future in the ad tech space is unpredictable, but that's where the opportunity lies. And that is why I'm excited to be spending my time thinking around how we can integrate purpose at the heart of the industry as we enter a new era in this landscape.

### **What excites you most about what you do?**

My position allows me to reframe the way I think, seeing challenges not as challenges, but as opportunities. At an early stage in my career, in an industry that in my opinion needs a good shaking up, I am in a role where I can embrace ambiguity. I am excited by the prospect of not knowing and throwing myself into unpredictable scenarios because inspiration and insights can be found in the least predictable places. For me, prioritizing conversations with humans over trawling through big data is what brings me the most pleasure. I learn a lot from the people that I talk to. Having chats and digging to really understand their even unconscious reasoning behind a consumption decision and then, from my perspective, seeing how that can work its way into the development of a product that makes an equitable and ethical difference in their lives based on their personal stories shared between their kids or friends for example. That's a super satisfying and exciting prospect for the role I have been fortunate enough to land myself in. Super cliché here, but there's a quote from Steve Jobs which inspired his ethos to innovation, "stay hungry, stay foolish". And I love that. It's an approach which led to the successes of Social Bubble and the thinking that to me, is essential to a role involving insights.

### **What beliefs define your approach to work? How would you define your leadership style?**

Building on my answer to the previous question, I would say to never stop digging. I truly believe an unrestricted mind is the most conducive to creativity, so not simply letting numbers define an insight, but exploring the 'why' because that is where the juicy details lie. With the opportunities that began to arise from creating my speculative start-up, Social Bubble, I became a "yes" man. Connie Yesman. Soaking up new opportunities, having conversations with new people, throwing myself in the deep end, and just hitting send on an email that may have felt bold or daunting. I take pride and have confidence in the research I conduct and as I found in Social Bubble, this led to some, if I say so myself really interesting thinking. An ethos that definitely underpins my approach is 'trust the process'. Late nights and a frazzled brain can often lead to a dwindling hope that progress is getting made, and occasionally this may not lead to an actionable result, but by putting your thinking and effort in the right place, you are building your understanding of the bigger picture which will inevitably have a positive payoff eventually.

As for my leadership style that's a hard one to pin down at this stage. I feel like I will always strive for a degree of transparency and mutualism with the team around me. An atmosphere that facilitates respect and encouragement of diverse opinions have, in my experience, been the most enjoyable and productive to be a part of. Again, creating an environment that is conducive to creativity, letting the people around you bring themselves and their passions to the work they do, and accepting mistakes and learning from them is important to me. I also want to be able to challenge, push and pull ideas. In previous experiences, I have found that having a leadership figure respectfully pick my ideas apart is ultimately what made them stronger. On the other side, I believe as a leader, it's super important to have self-awareness and be able to leave your ego at the door, not discouraging free-flowing conversation. I don't want to inhibit colleagues from giving their opinion on whether my ideas need work simply because I am in a position of leadership.

### **What has been the most rewarding project you've worked on, and why?**

It would have to be a fantastic project I worked on alongside the extremely talented Lynn Murphy and Alice Trotter on behalf of TERN - The Entrepreneurial Refugee Network. For the volunteering opportunity facilitated by Oliver Wyman and UAL, we were tasked with helping Usman Khalid, a coffee extraordinaire and all-around funny guy, reach his £8,000 Pay it Forward crowdfunding goal. The fundraiser was created to help secure a permanent location for Usman's social enterprise - Haven Coffee.



Coffee with a conscience. London's first coffee pop-up, run by refugees to help refugees. In less than 48 hours, we scripted, produced, and animated a 90-second video then distributed across the internet, designed to spread awareness of Usman's brand and encourage donations for the fundraiser.

Feel free to check out the video [here](#).  
It's pretty fun.

We were able to successfully help raise an additional £7,000 that Usman needed for his Pay it Forward crowdfunding campaign backed by the Mayor of London - meaning the funds raised were then doubled. Usman now has a permanent location for Haven Coffee near Walthamstow Central, London... and his coffee is great! Seriously. The project was a great opportunity for me and the team to apply our skills to a worthy cause. I would strongly encourage any newcomers to the industry, instead of applying for unpaid internships (which make you feel crap when you get declined to work for free), to consider finding a worthy cause to offer your skills to. The lessons I learned and the value I saw we added to Usman and his social enterprise gave me a great deal of satisfaction.

**We are big believers in diversity -- Not only because we believe in equality, but because we also think it's better for business. The Black Lives Matter movement has shaped industry conversations around both global injustice, and also lack of representation in our industry. How do you frame these kinds of conversations, both internally and with clients? Is there an emphasis on action, or are the conversations really more about communication?**

The (unfortunately) umbrella topic of diversity and inclusion raises an internal conflict for me. Part of which I understand requires me to continue educating myself. Throughout my Masters, I was fortunate enough to be part of numerous conversations exceeding the aspects of diversity I recognize I am in a privileged position to not have had to consider thus far. Where I struggle with an internal conflict is perhaps my role within the world of diversity. I have become extremely wary of not sensationalizing a minority group or having a token minority character or experience for the sake of face for a brand - in an attempt to seem more woke when in reality it is a purpose-driven facade. I feel it is incredibly important to not have a white-washed team of homogenized clones creating ads attempting to represent a

group they have no authentic experience with. In an ideal world, within the creative industry, we will be working in diverse teams, with people whose backgrounds and experiences can be fairly represented in the content they produce.

However, while there is work to be done to gain better representation of diverse talent into decision-making positions, I am of the opinion that we need to be prioritizing conversations around inclusivity, both within working environments and the content we produce. For me, while I continue to educate myself, I believe encouraging others around you to do the same is a great way to broaden perspectives and move in a direction that places diversity and inclusivity at the heart of projects. Drawing attention to movements and handing the mic over to the voices of people who have something to say about an experience that may yet be heard is super important.

### **Switching gears a bit, how do you find time to balance personal interests with your career? Do you believe work/life balance is possible? Anything you've implemented that you recommend that others try?**

To the annoyance of my mates, arguably I'm a little bit too good at stepping away from my phone outside of work hours. But when you spend the majority of your day looking at a screen for work, it's super important for me to bring myself out into the real world. Hence not being a social media user. I make a real effort to take care of my physical well-being as I know the effect this can have on my mental well-being too. Whether it's dragging my flat mates to have a pretty unimpressive game of tennis, or to just walk around one of London's beautiful parks (Hampstead Heath is a fave), I find that these moments where you force yourself to detach from your work, actually encourages a new clarity when you revisit a challenge you may have been struggling to overcome.

As much as I dedicate time for my own interests where I will find pleasure in taking time to cook some really great (in my opinion anyway) food in an evening, or to switch off completely and go to watch some live music, I'm also super lucky in that I am working in a sector and a position that I have a genuine interest and passion for. Perhaps that does blur the lines more, so it's something that I probably haven't yet found the balance with. Having been in situations that have worked well for my productivity, and those that have not, I have developed self-awareness of knowing how to avoid becoming overwhelmed. But I have also come to accept that you can't



always be productive. You can't necessarily be creative on demand. And part of the work/ life balance that I have been figuring out for myself has actually involved just not being so hard on myself.

Again, trust the process. When a task or project looks like a mountain, don't intimidate yourself by looking at the final destination, break that down into smaller, more digestible tasks. As a bit of a control freak, I enjoy using tools such as Notion, among other software - particularly on a, what I call a, 'sort your shit Sunday'. This is pretty self-explanatory but allows me to organize myself so that I feel as though I'm in a good place looking on to the week ahead. I find that taking the time to sit down, in my own space with my own tunes and glass of squash to outline where I am and where I need to be, super useful for not overloading the old brain. As my dad always told me, rightly or wrongly, the brain is a muscle. It needs time to rest up too.

### **What's your media diet? Where do you find inspiration?**

Slightly unconventionally for my generation and for the industry that I am in, but I don't actually have any active social media accounts, which can be both a blessing and a curse. As a result, I tend to rely more so on the conversations that I have in the real world. I was fortunate enough to have been a part of such a fantastic cohort for my MA in Advertising at the University of the Arts London. The discussions facilitated by our wonder-full course leader Dr. Paul Caplan were invaluable to me and helped broaden my mindset in ways I had not before. I'm always interested to hear what other people are reading and watching and keep a watchful eye on all of the usual suspect industry media outlets.

Interestingly, I have also been encouraged to relish my digital ignorance in a sense. In a recent conversation, this was pointed out to potentially be a strength. If I don't have the technical knowledge or am not following the thought processes of my predecessors, this can help to leverage my creativity. If I knew what technically would take longer to develop I may have avoided a particular strategy with my Social Bubble prototype. However, the new approach that I have, not limited by what I deem possible, put me in an exciting position. For example, one of the main sources of inspiration for Social Bubble was an earlier thought surrounding the application of Indra's Net as a tool to understand object-oriented ontology. This unexpected yet invaluable find has taught me not to close off any streams for inspiration regardless of their context.



**As you know, we believe there is so much value in having a wide range of teachers. What's the best piece of advice/knowledge you've stolen, and who/where'd you steal it from?**

During a conversation I had a little while ago I was given a nugget of advice and it is a mentality that has stuck with me. And so I have stolen it. It is the idea of having one foot in order and the other foot in chaos. For me, this notion perfectly fits how I would like to approach self-development in my life. The idea of having the balance of anchoring myself in order, but also not to get too comfortable so that I don't push myself beyond what I know in chaos. A degree of chaos I believe will help me encounter new opportunities and challenges expected to rock my metaphorical boat's stability, but ultimately add great value and push me to do, and be better. Better in the work I produce. Better in terms of the personal goals I set myself.