

# A strategy for success

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*Megan Sayle takes us on her journey from intern to strategist at [Carat](#) South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.*



I started at DAN at the beginning of 2015 as a very underqualified 22-year-old intern. I had just finished my post-graduate diploma in Marketing & Advertising Communications at Red & Yellow Creative School of Business after completing my BA degree at Stellenbosch University. I majored in English Literature and Philosophy (21-year-old me was convinced I could make a living, *sans* old man status and a beard, as a philosopher and if I ever do grow a beard I might try again), so by the time I graduated, I was very much in need of a post-grad qualification that was a little more practical.

## A natural fit

Red & Yellow was very much geared to teaching us about careers in traditional creative agencies, so when I attended the DAN internship open day I had little to no knowledge of what a media agency even did. Luckily for me, my DAN interview was with Lerina Biermann, who would later become my managing director at Carat in Cape Town, and she managed to see past my lack of knowledge and knew – even better than me – how well I would fit into the world of media.

## Eyes on the prize

During my internship I wasn't assigned to a specific DAN entity, but rather spent one or two months at each, which I really believed gave me a solid foundation, helped me to understand exactly how DAN worked as a group and allowed me to form good relationships across the group – beneficial for strong cross-agency teams.

I knew I wanted to work for Carat right from the start. I began my career at Carat working as Digital Account Executive, a new position even in 2015, on the Woolworths account. I then moved to the adidas account where I was given a lot more responsibility and began interacting with clients independently. These two accounts, while probably the most challenging I've worked on, were also the reason I learnt so much so quickly and more importantly, learnt to take responsibility for my work and my account.

## Strategic move

A highlight on my journey at Carat was being promoted to Account Manager of Beiersdorf just after we won the account – at the time, this was Carat's biggest client. To this day, this account teaches me the importance of good, rigorous media

practices while being open to challenging the way things have always been done.

It was while I was working on Beiersdorf that I began helping on pitches and through this process, I realised that while I was good at client service (I love a good status sheet), I was even better at strategy. I transitioned into the role of strategist under Graham Deneys, a position that wasn't clearly defined before this. This has really allowed me to carve out my role and allowed me to grow and learn in areas I am truly passionate about – which I think is reflected in the standard of my work.

### **Best part of the job?**

As a strategist, I get to work on dynamic projects across all of Carat's clients in Cape Town, Jo'burg and sub-Saharan Africa (which means I also get to travel to new and exciting countries), as well as to work on pitches... something that certainly keeps me on my toes!

### **A word (or two) of wisdom**

My advice to interns and anyone starting out in their careers, would be:

Don't be afraid of change.

Try not to panic when things get busy (read: frantic).

Do your best.

Always take responsibility for yourself and your work. Chances are you're in an organisation that is urging you to grow... so grow!

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