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Which masculine and feminine character traits make successful Account Managers? Awin Benelux in focus.

Bachelor in International Business Management

Author: Obinna Odenigbo

BAP coach: Paulina Christiaens

2019-2020

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Preface

First of all, I want to thank Awin Benelux for allowing me to do my internship at their company. I want to thank all my colleagues at Awin Benelux for an amazing time together during my internship. I am grateful for all the opportunities I came across in my time at Awin Benelux.

I want to thank my coach, Paulina Christiaens for the help and follow-ups of my Bachelor Thesis during the semester. She helped me when I struggled and supported me throughout this whole Bachelor Thesis.

To my friends, thank you for the support when I had a rough time and thanks for proofreading my Bachelor Thesis.

Lastly, I want to thank my parents for giving me the chance to participate in such an adventure and allowing me to go to Amsterdam for my internship and Bachelor Thesis.

-Obinna Odenigbo

Abstract

Masculinity and femininity in societies and workplaces is a topic that helps understand one's culture and the reasoning behind decisions that might be taken in those cultures. Thanks to research by psychologists such as Gerard Hendrik Hofstede, insights are gained into what part of the spectrum best defines a society, a country, an industry, or even a workplace and which character traits can be linked to this.

This research has the aim of finding and comprehensibly showing which masculine and feminine character traits Account Managers need to be successful, with a focus on Awin Benelux.

Because there was no prior research on this subject, researching it was challenging. Information from a lot of different sources had to be used to create a product worth reading and a product that could be useful for Awin Account Managers.

The thesis is specifically tailored to the Awin Benelux office and culture, so they are the ones that can reap the most benefits from this thesis.

Research on feminine and masculine character traits and successful Account Managers was used to make pertinent questions that gave relevant answers from the Account Managers and the HR-person interviewed.

With the help of the questions and the case study presented during the interview, interesting answers, thoughts, and opinions were uncovered.

To assess the importance of each of The Big Five Personality Traits which has a lot of underlying character traits, interviewees were asked to rank the personality traits from one to five. When computing the rankings of all interviewees conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability were found to be the most important personality traits, which are all feminine personality traits.

Goal-orientation, ambition, and action-orientation are the three main masculine character traits that predict success as an Account Manager. On the feminine side of the spectrum, tactfulness, empathy, and verbal skills were found to predict success. The character traits that make a good Account Manager vary wildly. Nor masculine or feminine character traits were found to be a pre-dominant predictor of successful Account Managers at Awin.

This may also be the reason why no specific character traits are searched for when looking for Account Managers at Awin. Broader subjects such as being a team player and being a self-starter are searched for.

Account Managers found being interviewed about this topic very interesting and insightful. This is why I encourage Awin Benelux to pay more attention to character traits in general and create feedback sessions and learning moments for character traits only.

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Process reflection

There was no significant difference in the way I was expecting to make my bachelor thesis and the way it was actually made. This is because Awin was able to transition from working in the office to working from home seamlessly. Contacting colleagues through Microsoft Teams instead of in real life is the only noteworthy adaptation that had to be made, interviews were also held through Microsoft Teams. Other than that everything went as planned, I am truly grateful to Awin and its employees, they kept answering my questions swiftly and were more than willing to help me with my Bachelor thesis when needed even during these strange times.

Introduction

This thesis has importance in the field of account management with a focus on what can benefit Account Managers at Awin Benelux. The thesis is supported by interviews and research conducted at the premises of Awin Benelux.

About Awin

Awin is an affiliate marketing company that connects advertisers (clients) with publishers. They make revenue based on the amount of traffic they enable the advertiser to get. This can be measured by the number of clicks, sales amount, or other metrics.

Awin thus has a team of Account Managers that take care of the clients who are in their portfolio. Clients who are also referred to as ‘accounts’ are taken care of based on different sales level agreements. Managing these accounts, keeping clients happy and loyal is an essential part of what is done by Awin Account Managers. Click [here](#) to watch a short company introduction I made for Awin.

Awin provides three sales level agreements: Account Development (AD), Account Management (AM), and Key Account Management (KAM). Awin has a lot of different clients that create a highly varying amount of sales. For example, a local bookstore might only get a couple of hundred sales per month through its affiliate program, whilst a global shoe brand gets close to ten thousand sales per month. The latter is more important because it brings in more revenue for Awin, the loss of the global shoe brand to a competitor would have a more significant impact than the loss of the local bookstore. For this reason, more attention and higher quality services are provided to the global shoe brand. To give the Account Managers that manage higher performers more space and time to do this efficiently they are given fewer clients in their portfolio. For the sake of this thesis, no distinctions are made between the Account Managers when discussing topics. This information is purely to enhance the reader experience and provide information about the different types of Awin Account Managers.

Motivation

By analyzing and reporting on the findings from the research the thesis aims to answer the question of which feminine and masculine character traits enable success as an Account Manager. This particular subject caught the attention of Awin Account Managers from the Account Development team. This paper is looking to inform and educate the Account Managers about what can be done to improve their performance and also what Account Managers and an HR-person consider feminine and masculine character traits that are indispensable for an Account Manager’s success.

A lot of revenue a company makes is strongly dependent on the relationship an Account Managers can sustain with their important customers. As sole contact point between the company they work for and the client, it can be said that in some ways the faith of the company lies in the hands of Account Managers. This is why companies need to have an idea of what makes Account Managers good at their job.

To my knowledge, there has not been any research on which masculine and feminine character traits make a good Account Manager. Research on masculinity and femininity has been found. Research on what makes a successful Account Manager was also found. This

thesis aims to combine research on what makes an Account Manager successful and research on masculinity and femininity to find the relation between masculine/feminine character traits and a successful Account Manager.

The Bachelor Thesis subject certainly links to Awin as this will help them maintain their relationships with their clients. It will give them insights into the masculine and feminine character traits that will improve their performance. Hopefully making use of the thesis in a way that positively impacts their work and therefore Awin.

1 Research description

This research is a qualitative research that tries to investigate the opinions of mainly Account Managers at Awin. The research methods that were used helped to provide insights and dive deeper into the aspect of character traits in the job as an Account Manager.

Even though this is a qualitative research, count systems and quantifiers are used to identify the importance of certain character traits and how many Account Managers think that particular character trait is important. The numbers are important to understand the opinions, emotions, and knowledge that lie behind the research and the questions asked. Also for Awin, this is much more interesting as they now have a clear idea of how many Account Managers believe certain character traits are important.

As written by Margarete Sandelowski, “Two myths about qualitative research are that real qualitative researchers do not count and cannot count. These anti number myths have led to the underutilization of numbers in qualitative research and to the simplistic view of qualitative research as non- or anti number. Yet numbers are integral to qualitative research, as meaning depends, in part, on number. As in quantitative research, numbers are used in qualitative research to establish the significance of a research project, to document what is known about a problem, and to describe a sample. But they are also useful for showcasing the labor and complexity of qualitative work and to generate meaning from qualitative data; to document, verify, and test researcher interpretations or conclusions; and to re-present target events and experiences. Although numbers are important in the treatment of qualitative data, qualitative researchers should avoid the counting pitfalls of verbal counting, overcounting, misleading counting, and acontextual counting” (Sandelowski, 2001).

1.1 Description of desk research

Desk research was started in February 2020 and was continuously updated and added upon until June 2020. Only sources deemed trustworthy were used. The worthiness of sources was assessed by the CRAAP-test. The CRAAP-test evaluates the objective reliability of a source based on currency, reliability, authority, accuracy, and purpose (cconline, 2019).

Sources that passed the CRAAP-test and that are used in this thesis are referenced using the American Psychological Association style.

1.2 Description of field research

For the field research eleven interviews were conducted. The interview encompassed the following five types of questions: credential verification, dichotomous, multiple-choice, rank order scaling, and open-ended questions. In addition to that, a case study was also put forward during the interview.

1.2.1 Interview

An interview is a journalistic endeavor that has the goal of identifying the opinion of a person on certain questions and topics. Interviewing has the advantage of enabling the clarification of answers, the questions can also be explained in more detail if this is needed. Interviews also have the advantage of obtaining information about opinions, beliefs, and an individual's feelings in a more precise manner (Notrefamille, 2020; Evalued, 2006).

Access to ten Awin Account Managers and one HR-person was granted which was enough for the purpose of this qualitative research. All ten Account Managers and the HR-person were interviewed.

At the Awin Benelux office, only one person works for HR-Benelux. All other HR-staff work in other regions and could not have provided relevant information for this research.

Besides interviews being interesting and beneficial for the interviewer, they can also be beneficial for the interviewee. As the United States. Retraining and Re-Employment Administration suggests, “An even better way to look at the interview has been mentioned, a situation in which the client learns something about himself and his attitudes” (United States. Retraining and Re-Employment Administration., 1946).

The latter was certainly achieved, interviewees appreciated the chance to delve deeper into the subject and learned something about themselves and their character traits.

After the interview, Julia Rahimi Rigi concluded with, “I really liked it (the interview). You have really good questions, it is always nice to think about these things and I will probably have something for myself in this (interview) for my objectives and key results so it is really good to think about this (character traits)” (Rahimi Rigi, 2020).

All interviews were semi-structured. All the questions in the interview guide were always asked, sometimes additional questions were asked when short answers were given and/or interesting details were omitted. This provided great flexibility when dealing with questions and enabled the collection of more pertinent answers. Thought, emotions, and opinions can be difficult to convey, certainly when no time to reflect on the questions is given beforehand. Probing questions encouraged interviewees to think critically and view questions deeper than their surface-level (Wood, 2019; Statisticssolutions, 2020).

The interview guide for the HR-person mostly corresponds to the interview guide of the Account Managers. The main difference is that questions are asked from a hiring and observation perspective.

HR takes care of all things related to the workplace, at Awin this includes HR as a business partner, talent acquisition, and HR-operations (Ottens, 2020; shopify, 2020). This is why questions asked to the HR-person display what is expected from an Account Manager at Awin from a management perspective (Nouri, 2019).

Similar questions are asked to the HR-person. Answers from HR are intended to specifically answer the question of which character traits that Awin Benelux currently search for in an Account Manager. Answers from HR are also used for extra information on subjects that are already answered by Account Managers (Nouri, 2019).

The Account Managers interview guide can be found appendix A. Three questions were added to section 1 for the HR-person's interview (this can be viewed in appendix B). Detailed hypotheses and expectations for the interview guides can be found in appendix C.

In appendix D each question is categorized under one of the five aforementioned question types.

1.2.2 Case study

A case study is a realistic description of a situation or event. Something that often happens in the workplace or already happened before. In many cases, a case study is presented as a problem situation or dilemma (Haele & Twycross, 2017).

For this research, Interviewees were presented with a case study and asked how they would react if this situation were to take place. This gives actual and unambiguous answers from real Account Managers. Having a case study during the interviews and having interviewees reinforce their answers and criticize the other option was insightful (Haele & Twycross, 2017).

An illustrative case study method was used during this research. An illustrative case study is one of the four types of case studies that can be used. An illustrative case study is characterized by being descriptive and presenting the interviewee with a realistic event or occurrence that could take place in their work environment. In an illustrative case study, the solutions to the issue already exist and are provided to the interviewee. In this research, this created a dilemma in which interviewees had to handle a situation where he could only meet respond to positively to one client (Colostate, 2020).

The case study, its questions, and detailed hypotheses and expectations can be found in appendix E.

2 Desk-research

2.1 Account Managers

An Account Manager supervises a certain number of clients for his/her company. Account Managers work together with these clients (accounts) and put time and effort into the accounts in several ways. This creates a relationship and a business partnership that aims to meet the expectations of the client. Maintaining performance and looking for novel ways to increase the client's success is a task that Account Managers take upon themselves. This is done by advising, selling products that fit in the client's strategy, and communicating internally to get other teams involved in the success of the client (Jobat, 2010).

There are two types of Account Managers: farmers and hunters. Farmers focus on relationships with clients that are already part of the company's portfolio. On the other hand, hunters have the task to provide the company with new business and revenue-making opportunities (Jobat, 2010) Account Managers at Awin are farmers as they have a Sales team to take care of the hunting.

Most Account Managers have a commercial background. It is usually expected that an Account Manager is a stress-resilient person because the job is performance-based. Having commercial insights is a must and the same can be said for being customer-orientated. Creativity is a plus point as this enables Account Managers to think outside of the box and provide interesting options to their clients (Jobat, 2010).

Account Managers stand in the frontline when it comes to communication and contact with the clients. They play a vital role in the front office and constantly need to find novel ways to keep their clients satisfied. To add to this they also have to keep internal clients satisfied by keeping all relevant parties informed with needed information. This enables client inquiries to

be responded to swiftly. Relevant information can then be shared with the clients, which keeps them satisfied. Having this constant flow of information enables the clients to reap profits thanks to their partnership with Awin which in turn leads to profits for Awin (Workable, 2020).

2.2 Account Managers at Awin

Daily, Account Managers at Awin perform various tasks. In general, their main aim is to grow the advertisers within their portfolio. This can be done in a lot of different ways but can be categorized under 4 categories:

- ❖ Relationship-management: maintaining a good relationship with the clients by answering questions, concerns, and staying in contact with them.
- ❖ Analyses of performance numbers: Using different platforms to analyze performance numbers. Creating a comprehensive view of what the advertiser should implement, improve upon, maintain, and optimize.
- ❖ Proposal of new opportunities and projects: creating exposure plans for the advertiser and optimizing their collaborations to create a higher revenue stream and increase performance in the short and long-term
- ❖ Routine tasks: recurrent tasks such as sending emails, invoicing, and calling advertisers (Awin, 2018; Jobat, 2010).

2.2.1 Account Development team

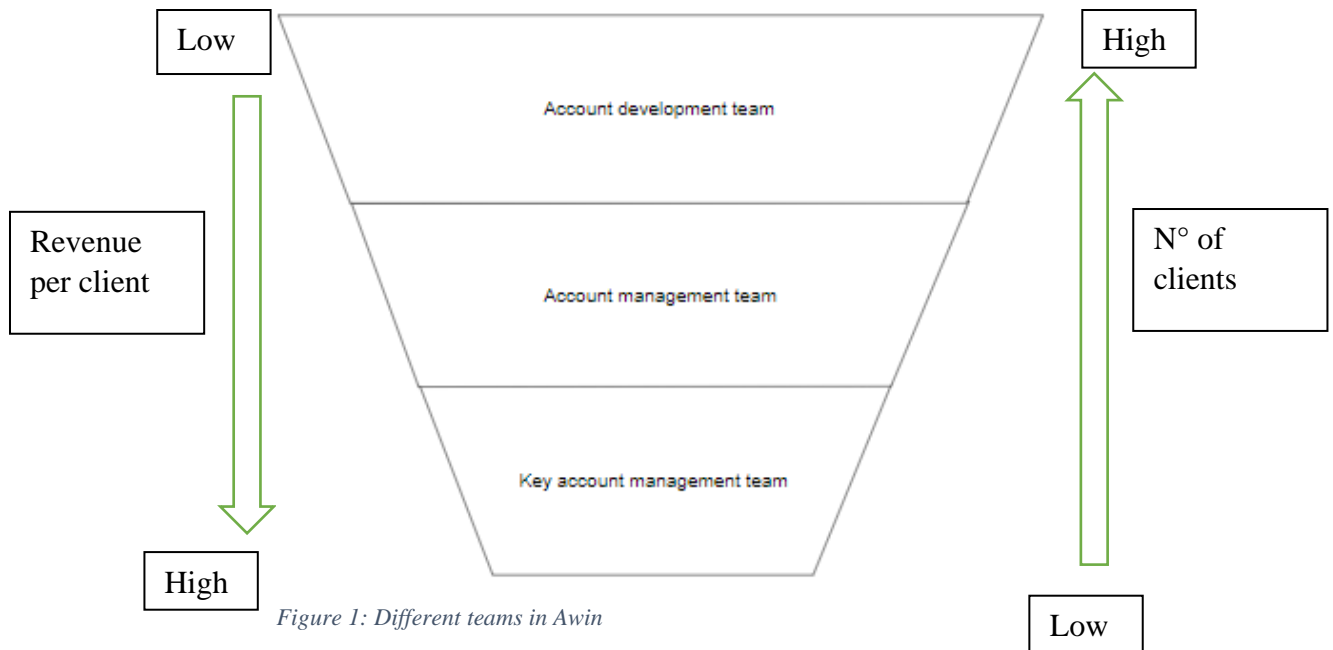
Account Development is the lowest service level at Awin. Account Managers on the Account Development level have between 50 to 60 accounts in their portfolio. When a new client wants to set up an affiliate program this is usually where their journey starts. All the tasks mentioned above apply to Account Managers in the account development team + the task to grow prolific advertisers to the account management team level (Awin, 2017).

2.2.2 Account Management team

Account Management is the middle service level at Awin. Account Managers on the Account Management level have between 10 and 20 accounts in their portfolio. Prolific advertisers from the Account Development level can grow to the Account Management level. All the tasks mentioned above apply to Account Managers in the Account Management team + the task to grow prolific advertisers to the Key Account Management team level (Awin, 2018).

2.2.3 Key Account Management team

Key Account Management is the highest service level at Awin. Account Managers on the Key Account Management team have fewer than 10 accounts in their portfolio. Prolific accounts from the Account Management team can grow to the Key Account Management level (Awin, 2019).



2.3 Character traits

A person's personality is made of different character traits. Character is a combination of internal character traits and character traits that can be taught. The environment in which a person works plays a consequential role in the development of these character traits (Emsie, 2016).

2.3.1 The Big Five Personality Traits

The Big Five Personality Traits is a theory that describes a person based on five predefined dimension clusters. The five specific clusters have underlying character traits that help in defining what each of the Big Five personalities mean in real-life situations (Wiggins, 1996).

For the purpose of this research, each of The Big Five Personality Traits will be defined as being either masculine or feminine.

Agreeableness

If an individual scores high in agreeableness they will be empathetic, amiable, certain, mindful, artless, and candid. Agreeable people tend to keep others in mind when making decisions and acting on something. This is a trait that is undoubtedly associated with femininity (Nospensees, 2018; Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011).

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness evaluates the level of association, steadiness, and inspiration for arranged conduct (Nospensees, 2018).

If a person scores high in conscientiousness, they are organized, formal, hard working, punctual, orderly, ambitious, and persevering. Both feminine and masculine people can score high on different aspects of conscientiousness. It is noteworthy that feminine workforces score high on self-discipline, dutifulness, and order. The three mentioned character traits are considered in this research, this is why conscientiousness is considered feminine (Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011).

Emotional stability

A high score in emotional stability demonstrates that individuals are not apprehensive and stable. Emotional stability has the most conclusive evidence and in most aspects relates more to femininity than masculinity (Nospensees, 2018; Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011).

Extraversion

By this attribute, the person's social skills are assessed, in other words, the degree of enthusiasm and enticement that the individual has when he/she is in contact with others. It is additionally firmly connected to the level of joy gained through social connections (Nospensees, 2018).

This trait can reflect assertiveness, being self-assured and social skills. This is a trait that can mostly be related to people with masculine character features (Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011).

Openness to new experiences

This quality surveys the degree to which an individual effectively looks for new opportunities and embraces unique tasks. A high score on this component shows a person is an inquisitive thinker, has wide interests, is inventive, is unique, and innovative (Nospensees, 2018).

Due to the high divergence of the trait, it cannot be seen as feminine or masculine. A feminine workforce does score more on openness to new feelings. Whilst, masculine workforces score higher on openness to new ideas (Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011).

During the course of this research, the personality trait of openness to new experiences is looked at in relation to openness to new ideas. Openness to new experiences will thus be characterized as a masculine personality trait. (Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011; Cherry, 2020).

Summary

Personality trait	Feminine/masculine
Agreeableness	Feminine
Conscientiousness	Feminine
Emotional stability	Feminine
Extraversion	Masculine
Openness to new experiences	Masculine

Table 1: Summary - Personality traits

2.3.1.1 Successful Account Managers – The Big Five Personality Traits

The following five personality traits are measured with the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient measures the negative or positive correlation between a trait and job performance, in this case as an Account Manager. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is a number between -1 and 1 . With 1 showing a completely positive correlation and -1 a completely negative between the personality trait and job performance (Westfall, 2020).

The reliability of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient is measured by statistical significance. In other words, is the research due to chance or probably true? The lower the statistical

significance number is the higher the chance that the research is true. Example: correlation coefficient is 0.5: $1-0.5= 0.95$ or 95% probability of being true. As a rule of thumb, everything between 95 and 100 percent is considered highly reliable (Surveysystem, 2016).

Extraversion

Extraversion has the strongest correlation to good job performance for an Account Manager within The Big Five Personality Traits. Positive correlations were found between extraversion and all measures of job performance for an Account Manager. Based on this research it is clear that extraversion is a contributing factor to good job performance (Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala, 2014).

	Relationship performance	Sales performance	Overall performance
Pearson	.26	.28	.31
Significance	.0007	.0002	<.0001

Figure 2: Extraversion

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is an important factor when it comes to the overall performance of an Account Manager. Conscientiousness ranks second in correlation with the overall job performance of an Account Manager. Conscientious people are self-disciplined who think things through and get tasks done. These are all qualities that make people successful at their job in general, this is no different for Account Managers (Bennett, 2017; Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala, 2014).

	Relationship performance	Sales performance	Overall performance
Pearson	.25	.24	.29
Significance	.0009	.0011	.0001

Figure 3: Conscientiousness

Agreeableness

Agreeableness shows the third highest correlation with the overall job performance of an Account Manager after extraversion and conscientiousness. This is because agreeableness results in better relationships, avoidance of anger, and aggression towards clients and involvement in altruistic activities that help others, in this case, the clients. This has a positive impact on an Account Manager's work as he/she is a point of contact for the client (Theworldcounts, 2020; Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala, 2014).

	Relationship performance	Sales performance	Overall performance
Pearson	.17	.22	.22
Significance	.0396	.0038	.0041

Figure 4: Agreeableness

Openness to new experience

Openness to new experience ranks fourth on the list of The Big Five Personality Traits that predict good overall performance as an Account Manager. Nevertheless, there is still a positive relationship between openness to new experiences and job performance as an Account Manager (Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala, 2014).

	Relationship performance	Sales performance	Overall performance
Pearson	.16	.10	.15
Significance	.0352	.2065	.0537

Figure 5: Openness to new experiences

Emotional stability

There is no real relationship between job performance and emotional stability. As measured by the aforementioned statistical significance this is not full proof as the probability of being true is quite low compared to the other Big Five Personality Traits (Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala, 2014).

	Relationship performance	Sales performance	Overall performance
Pearson	.07	.09	.09
Significance	.3663	.2523	.2365

Figure 6: Emotional stability

Here you have an illustration of the top 3 personality traits for each performance type.

Legend:

First position	*
Second position	**
Third position	***

Type of performance	Personality trait				
	Extraversion	Openness to Experience	Emotional stability	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness
Relationship	*			**	***
Sales	*			**	***
Overall	*			**	***

Table 2: Top three - Personality traits

The top three personality traits that make a good Account Manager are clear. With extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness ranking in the same position in the top 3 for all performance types. This also makes it clear that extraversion is unquestionably the most important personality trait from The Big Five Personality Traits that predict success as an Account Manager according to this research by Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala (Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala, 2014).

2.3.2 Masculinity versus femininity in the workforce

Hofstede defines masculinity as, “The Masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive” (Hofstede Insights, 2020).

Hofstede defines femininity as, “Femininity stands for a society in which social gender roles overlap: Both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede Insights, 2020).

Differences between feminine and masculine character traits in workplaces have become more understood and now pose a greater dilemma for companies when dealing with daily operations. Choosing between a more aggressive masculine approach or an empathic feminine approach. Managers and executives are starting to realize these differences and that combining both can bring the best out of a workforce and increase their bottom line (Gannon, 2012).

Typically, masculine workforces are more systematic and more focused on one task at hand. Breaking problems into smaller bite-size components and solving them immediately. Whilst masculine workforces will focus on the specific task that is given to them, feminine

workforces are more likely than not to consider the organization as a whole looking at the problem from a wider perspective (Gannon, 2012).

Feminine workforces are also characterized by having more of a team spirit than masculine workforces. These workplaces show more support, are more rewarding and show more compassion (Gannon, 2012).

On the other hand, masculine workforces have and convey more confidence than feminine workforces. When performance is on the line masculine workforces will be more apt to take somewhat rash decisions to not negatively affect their performance numbers. This is also accentuated by the fact that feminine workforces always have the feeling that there is potential for improvement, whilst masculine workforces think they know more than they actually do (Gannon, 2012).

A winner-take-all mentality is highly related to a masculine workplace. A workforce where merciless attitude, physical ability, and emotional toughness are rewarded and encouraged. This is the opposite of the feminine workplace where accountability, sensitivity, and humility are encouraged (The Representation Project, 2019).

Phrases such as, ‘Who worked the most hours this week?’ and ‘Who made the biggest impact on profits?’ are most likely to be used in masculine workforces. This is what has been defined as the masculinity contest culture. In workforces where this contest culture is strong, it is also likely that leaving work early for whatever reason is frowned upon and that having a healthy work/life balance is more difficult (The Representation Project, 2019).

Contrary to the masculine workforce the feminine workforce seeks safety for not only the employee but also the people that depend on the employee for example offspring, elderly parents, and partner. For these reasons, feminine workforces have more emotional intelligence and patience for fellow employees and have a better understanding of what it takes to have a good work/life balance. Furthermore, greater collaboration is achieved thanks to this. Creativity is also enhanced as the workforce finds innovative ways to make the workplace more pleasant and adaptable (Knepper, 2020).

2.3.2.1 Illustrative case study

Situation

The product for which marketing is to be done has not had a marketing campaign in the past and is selling under the threshold to keep it in the assortment. A survey has been sent out to consumers to get a better idea of the interest and market for the product. As research before launching was not conclusive, the deadline to pull or keep the product from the market has been set for one month from now. Survey analysis will be ready in three weeks, which gives company XYZ’s workforce only one week to decide.

Question

Should the company XYZ launch a new marketing campaign that would approximately cost them ten-thousand euros?

Feminine workforce reports to CEO: ‘We are waiting for the results of the survey that will become available to us three weeks from now. We are not sure if the product is unsuccessful due to marketing or due to other issues that will be uncovered after the survey is analyzed. We

know you have set a deadline, but would you consider postponing it by two weeks so we can make an educated decision?’ (Gannon, 2012; The Representation Project, 2019).

Masculine workforce reports to CEO: ‘We will be allocating a budget of ten-thousand euros to this product. We are running out of time and cannot wait on the survey analysis as this will be released too late. After the survey analysis is made available, we will review it and take needed action and update the campaign if deemed necessary’ (Gannon, 2012; Knepper, 2020; The Representation Project, 2019).

2.3.3 Masculinity versus femininity in communication

Communication is an essential part of all companies. Communication varies a lot among companies and is definitively affected by where a company stands on the femininity and masculinity spectrum (Eventoff, 2017).

Masculinity

Declarative statements

Definition: statement of a fact, claiming and/or asserting something.

Example: Manager says, ‘I know that the overtime will take away time from your weekend, but this is not a choice. The company needs you to launch the new marketing campaign by Saturday evening.’ (Vocabulary, 2020; Huffpost, 2017).

Unemotional

Definition: putting facts before feelings, being able to separate emotions, and the matter at hand (Huffpost, 2017).

Example: Person A: ‘I am going to fire Fran.’

Person B: ‘Are you sure? She is going through some difficult financial times because of the divorce and has two kids.’

Person A: ‘I am just doing what is best for the company.’

(Huffpost, 2017)

Direct and confident

Examples:

- ❖ Stating opinions with conviction, not beginning phrases with: I think, maybe and but.
- ❖ Making eye contact.
- ❖ Reading the room: engaging the audience in what is being said.
- ❖ Confident body language: Upright position, no fidgeting, looking at the audience.

(Huffpost, 2017; wikiHOW, 2020)

Authoritative speech

Definition: influential speech that comes from a person of power. Usually used to exert control and to make decisions (Yourdictionary, 2020; Huffpost, 2017).

Example: CEO says, 'from now on Fran will be the leader of the account development team, she will be in charge of all operational activities within the team.' (Huffpost, 2017).

Femininity

Use of questions

Example: Manager says, 'We will be working overtime this week due to a new campaign launch. Is this okay with everyone?' (Huffpost, 2017).

Disclaimers

Definition: disclaimers come before a statement and diminish the significance of the statement (Huffpost, 2017).

Example:

- ❖ 'This might sound stupid'
- ❖ 'I am probably wrong'
- ❖ 'You probably already know this'
- ❖ 'I am not sure, but...'

(Huffpost, 2017)

Hedges

Definition: softens the statement and hopes to minimize and adverse reactions (Huffpost, 2017).

Example:

- ❖ Try, to do this right the next time.
- ❖ I hope you don't make this mistake again.
- ❖ Maybe, you should try taking an earlier bus then you will not come in late again.

(Huffpost, 2017)

Tag questions

Definition: a tag question is a normal sentence/statement followed by unnecessary mini-question. This can diminish the significance of the statement (Englishclub, 2020; Huffpost, 2017).

Examples:

- ❖ I am right, am I not?
- ❖ You don't like my new report, do you?
- ❖ She is not at her desk, is she?

(Huffpost, 2017)

2.3.4 Masculinity versus femininity in the workspace

Another distinguishing factor when it comes to characterizing a masculine or feminine organization is the workspace and how it looks. Here the character traits of the feminine and masculine workplaces will be put forward. This is interesting as it illustrates which type of office spaces could be considered masculine and which can be considered feminine.

Workspaces can betray or shape company cultures, without knowing it the environment around an employee can change the way they think, talk, and body language (Edwards & Sender, 2018).

Colors are a significant part of what type of office space a company has. As a rule of thumb masculine offices tend to have darker colors whilst feminine offices have a lighter color. Fanciful patterns can also be associated with feminine workspaces and decors, in masculine workspaces, most patterns tend to be abstract. Circles and stripes are patterns that can be associated with both masculine and feminine office spaces (Professionalstaging, 2017).

Typically, masculine office spaces are minimalistic in style and accessories are kept to a bare minimum and are usually made from rugged and durable materials such as wood and metals. Softer and elegant accessories will be found in feminine offices. The same goes for furniture, durable, rugged, and durable materials will be used for masculine offices whilst furniture in feminine offices tends to be softer, lighter and made from less durable materials (Professionalstaging, 2017).

Is it possible to mix both masculine and feminine office decor?

Yes, a neutral workspace is recognized as the best way to create a dynamic workspace. Letting the two types of decors contrast each other makes the space more interesting and helps alleviate the boredom that one might feel in a monotoned office. For example, this can be achieved by purchasing accessories that fall somewhere in between femininity and masculinity, focusing on contemporary lines, focusing on mid-range colors, contrasting light colors with dark colors, and using elegant accessories with rough textures (Professionalstaging, 2017).

Below you have typical examples of the masculine (up left), feminine (up right) and neutral (bottom) workspaces. These examples are on the extreme ends of the spectrum as they are made by designers to illustrate what both ends of the spectrum look like. In reality, feminine offices will almost always have a touch of femininity and vice versa (Professionalstaging, 2017).

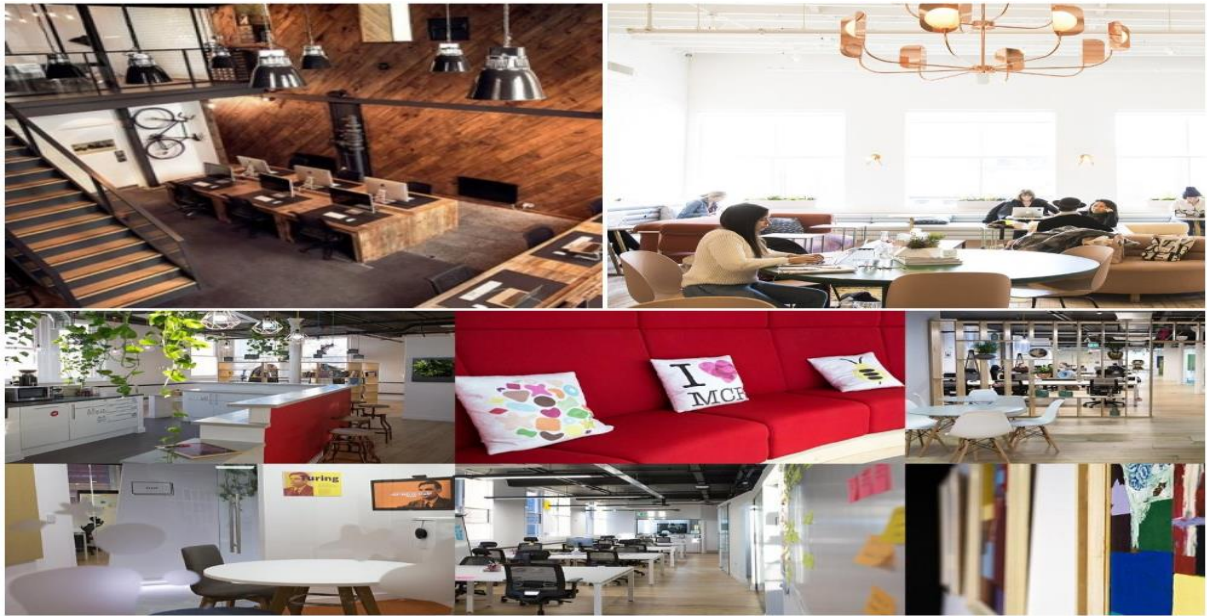


Figure 7: Masculine, feminine and neutral offices

3 Field research – Results

Field research was conducted to answer the following questions:

- ❖ How do Awin Account Managers characterize Awin?
- ❖ Which character traits does Awin currently search for in an Account Manager?
- ❖ Do Awin Account Managers get feedback on professional character traits?
- ❖ Which opportunities are there for Awin Account Managers to improve character traits?
- ❖ What character traits make a successful Account Manager at Awin?
- ❖ How important is each of The Big Five Personality Traits for Awin Account Managers?

After obtaining the answers to these questions the relationship between specific masculine or feminine character traits and the success as an Account Manager is assessed. Which provides an answer to the main research question:

- ❖ Which masculine and feminine character traits make successful Account Managers? Awin Benelux in focus.

For field research, a limited number of tools were used.

- ❖ The questionnaire (interview guide) was needed to perform the interview.
- ❖ Microsoft Teams which is a videoconferencing platform was used. The platform has a recording option that enabled video and audio recording. All interviews can be viewed here: <https://obinnagrantsite.com/website>. The transcriptions can be read in appendix F.
- ❖ Lastly, as backup-up an external recording tool was used in case Microsoft Teams failed to record.

For field research, there was the advantage of having a vast number of Account Managers available at Awin Benelux that were able and willing to help answer the question of, ‘Which masculine and feminine character traits make successful Account Managers? Awin Benelux in focus’. Besides Account Managers, there was an HR-person that could be relied upon. This was very interesting as HR has insights on what they look for in an Account Manager they employ and therefore has an understanding of what makes a good Account Manager.

Field research was conducted by interviewing ten Account Managers and one HR-person. A short case study was used during the interview, to assess how Account Managers would handle a plausible work-situation. The HR-person was asked similar questions as the Account Managers, to assess if what was expected from management is in-line with what Account Managers do.

In this field research, character traits are either masculine or feminine. Character traits that make a good Account Manager were mentioned during interviews. Some interviewees also gave clear descriptions of character traits without mentioning the name of the character trait. These descriptions were analyzed and assigned a fitting character trait.

For each character trait, interviewees' answers are synthesized to find out how each character trait relates to the job as an Account Manager. Please, be aware that these are opinions from Account Managers at Awin and how they view each character trait in their work environment.

For the interviews, Account Managers from the Account Development, Account Management, and Key Account Management team were selected. This was done to have answers from a diverse group of Account Managers working at all three service levels at Awin.

When selecting interviewees, there was no particular reason an Account Manager was selected or not, this was done at random per team and based on Account Managers that expressed interest in the topic.

As mentioned before the HR-person that was interviewed was the only one available in the region field research was being performed, no selection could be made there.

All text in the field research stems from answers to questions that were asked during interviews that were held between the 14 until the 23 of April.

Below you have all the interviewees.

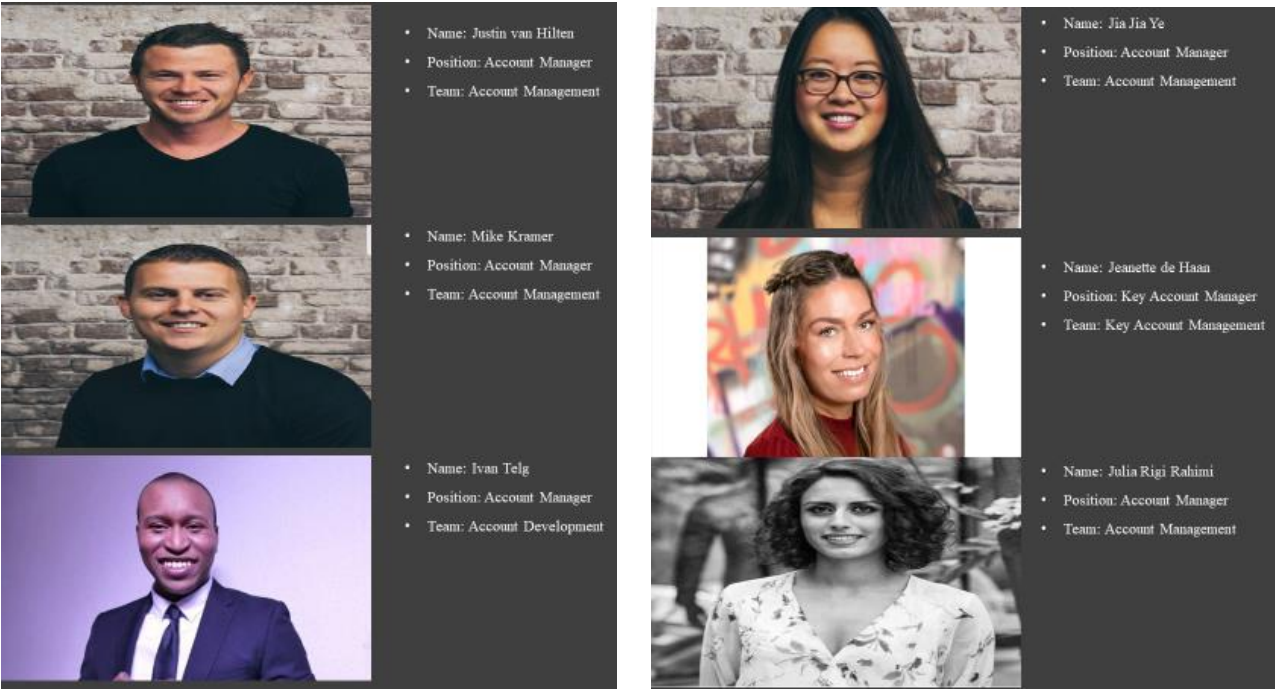


Figure 8: Interviewees 1

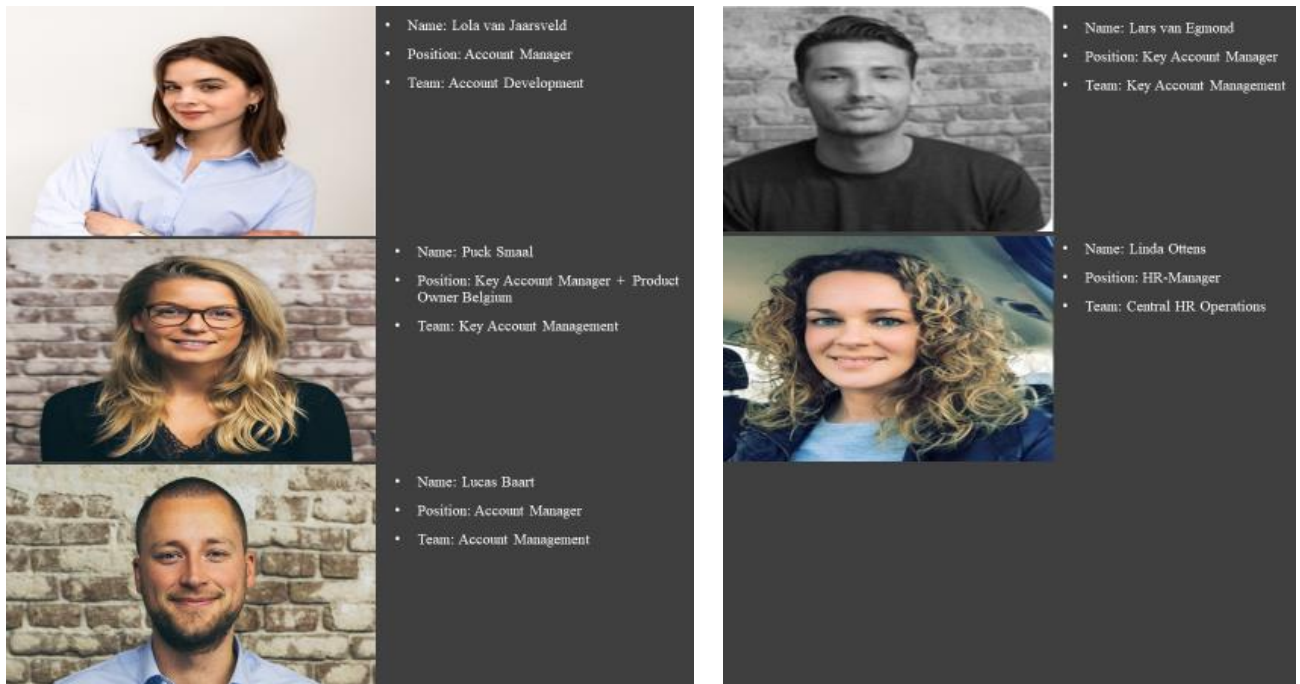


Figure 9: Interviewees 2

3.1 Characterization of Awin

How Account Managers view Awin is being investigated in the characterization of Awin. This is done by analyzing questions from section 4 in appendix A.

The personality given to Awin will be categorized as feminine or masculine according to the table in appendix G. Account Managers describe their work environment based on character traits, this will showcase if the Account Managers' work environment at Awin is masculine or feminine.

If mostly feminine character traits are given as points of improvement this means Awin has to get more in touch with their feminine side and vice versa.

3.1.1 Positive

Awin is a transparent company that involves clients, employees and the external world to find effective solutions to implicit and explicit problems. Awin enjoys talking about the future by setting S.M.A.R.T¹ objectives and key results² that are ambitious and can be risky. This ambition is shown by Awin's quest to be the best affiliate network in the world, being the partner of choice for thousands of brands and providing best in class service. In the past Awin has shown this ambition by acquiring numerous other companies over the years and rigorously scouting the market/industry for innovations. Awin always strives to be the best in their business and also shows that to its competitors.

In the past Awin struggled to include smaller companies as they were not readily accessible to clients with low revenue. In a strive to include smaller companies, Awin has changed this and

¹ Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely

² Hereinafter referred to as OKR or OKRs when plural.

now has the ability to offer quality services to the smallest and largest companies. Creating an all-inclusive and all-embracing brand.

In addition to company growth, Awin also makes employee growth a mission of theirs. With various ways to learn on the job in a fun and modern environment. Where there is a will there is a way, Awin will do everything in its power to give employees the opportunities to be able to grow within their current function and the company. In an organic hierarchy where everyone is equal, this creates an atmosphere where employees can get easy access to all employees and all data, they need to excel at their jobs.

In addition to company growth, Awin also takes care of employees in other ways. Awin offers real, tangible, and effective solutions to deal with situations that occur. An example of this is providing employees with more time off to take care of loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. Showcasing that Awin does not only value work but is also a team player when it comes to providing solutions to employees.

Hard work and good performance are valued by Awin, to get a promotion mere work-experience will not be enough. Thorough screenings are done to find the person most suitable for the position, may this be internal or external.

The work hard, play hard mentality is a big part of Awin's culture. In addition to hard work and good performances, Awin also wants employees to have fun as a unity. Fun and engaging activities are organized at various occasions, this ranges from video game tournaments to companywide quizzes. As Jeannette de Haan, Account Manager at Awin was quoted saying "It feels like we're all kids sometimes when we are in the office like it's a zoo and the parents left and the kids are just going crazy" (de Haan, 2020).

Even though Awin is a global company its actions are streamlined by its headquarters. Having various ways of making sure every region is up-to-date and that the globality of Awin is working in synchronicity on actions that have a companywide influence. From the HQ to the regional offices transparency is really on the rise at Awin. The company-wide OKRs and strategy for the coming year are available to everyone.

Communication between employees is dynamic and constant. Awin is a melting pot of personalities that complement each other and help each other in approaching issues from different perspectives.

In giving feedback, positive reinforcement is key at Awin, this is done by looking at things employees are doing well and trying to capitalize on those, instead of pointing to things that need improvement.

Lastly, the mission is the vision and the vision is the mission. At Awin employees feel the mission and the vision in every action the company undertakes, what the company strives for can be felt on a daily basis.

3.1.2 Points for improvement

Even though Awin does believe in a nice balance between fun and hardwork there is an excessive workload per capita. Within the organization, a few burn-outs have been reported and according to interviewees, the transparency regarding those cases leaves a lot to be desired. This lack of transparency raises questions about what steps Awin takes to help these employees and preventing other employees from burning out. The high workload stunts

growth that is fueled by employees at their respective functions because the time for employees to think, research, and implement side activities which can benefit them in the workplace is not available.

When it comes to the workplace Awin has no problem creating know-how to intricate problems. Where Awin does have a problem is in the retention of that knowhow. Awin has lost valuable key components of its personnel recently, next to that, there is an apparent lack of documentation on how to perform certain tasks. Therefore some information is only stored in the brains of several employees. This can be the cause of issues if essential Awin personnel decides to leave the company.

3.2 Character traits that Awin currently searches for in Account Managers

This section aims to answer the following question: ‘Which character traits Awin Benelux currently search for in an Account Manager?’

To answer this question the interview with the HR-person’s interview was thoroughly analyzed as Account Managers do not have the ability to provide objective answers to this question.

The aim is to find out if Awin does give any type of information about character traits that are of importance to Account Managers. It is also to analyze if there is a specific personality trait that Awin searches for when looking for an Account Manager. This assesses the importance that the company gives to character traits when looking for an Account Manager.

Currently, Awin does not search for any specific character traits in their when looking for a new Account Managers. Even though they do have three core qualities which are being a self-starter, being a team player, and being a perfect match that they search for when recruiting, this applies to all levels that Awin recruits for. The first two core qualities have underlying character traits that are analyzed below.

Although there are underlying character traits that are preferable when taking an Account Manager into employment at Awin, there are no observable character traits that will immediately lead to non-selection. As the reason why a person is not taking into employment is hard to pinpoint, it is more of a general feeling than a specific character trait.

Self-starter

Being able to work independently is very important at Awin. The COVID-19 pandemic was given as an example by the interviewee. Even though all employees are working from home in such a situation, they have to be able to hold their own and work to the benefit of the company. This is done with fewer guidelines and is a true testament to employees being self-starters.

Being a self-starter is viewed as a masculine character trait as it encompasses the need to be pro-active which is a masculine character trait when referring to appendix G.

Team player

At Awin they have a work hard, play hard mentality. With an informal culture, it is expected to have some type of contact with colleagues and find time to adapt to this culture.

Cooperation and caring are two pillars of a feminine culture. Team player encompasses both these character traits and is thus considered a feminine character trait.

Perfect match

The most important and difficult part of Awin's hiring process is that the potential employee has to match with the team he/she will be joining. This is not dependent on character traits, but it looks at the qualities the team needs at the moment of hire.

3.2.1 Personality tests

Currently, potential Awin employees do not have to take any type of personality or character test before being taken into employment. Awin used to use the DISC-test³, even though the DISC-test did have its benefits there were some pitfalls in the HR-staff's opinion.

Awin's HR-staff is currently seeking for a new personality test to implement to have a better and more in-depth overview of the candidate.

3.3 Feedback on professional character traits at Awin

The sub-question being answered here is, 'Do Awin Account Managers get feedback on professional character traits'.

The first part of section 3 (appendix A) of all interviews were analyzed to investigate if feedback is given and how it is given.

This gives an image of the importance of giving feedback on character traits. If feedback is given frequently this means that Awin believes that talking about and improving character traits is important.

Manager

Account Managers at Awin receive most of their feedback from their respective managers. This is done on numerous occasions and does not adhere to strict dates. Good examples of this are contract negotiations with clients that can happen up to 4 times a year for an Account Manager. It is not unusual for managers to attend these meetings and give feedback on character traits afterwards.

In addition to that, one-on-one meetings are scheduled every month between the Account Manager and their manager. During these meetings, mostly positive points and character traits are reinforced, but some points and character traits that should be improved upon are discussed as well. Quarterly check-ins and half-yearly meetings with managers are also held where similar topics are discussed more extensively.

At Awin managers are always readily available to support and give feedback if the Account Manager requests this. Awin has a culture where everybody is viewed as equal, stepping up and asking feedback relating to a certain topic at any time is always viewed positively.

Some Account Managers at Awin still believe that more feedback could be given on the subject of character traits because without this feedback it is hard for them to understand how

³ Dominant, Inspiring, Supportive, and Cautious

they are perceived. This lack of feedback on character traits has already been communicated to the respective managers.

Peers

Colleagues give feedback to Account Managers during team meetings. This feedback also comes from other Account Managers as they work together in teams. As with feedback from managers, Account Managers can also request feedback from peers.

Clients

Clients do send spontaneous feedback to Account Managers to show appreciation for their professional character, although this does not happen often.

Net Promoter Score⁴ survey

Twice a year an NPS survey is sent out to clients. This NPS survey looks to provide Awin with an evaluation of its overall performance as an affiliate network. A small section of the survey is dedicated to Account Managers and asks for feedback on a few topics such as:

- ❖ How fast Account Managers respond.
- ❖ Opportunities provided by the Account Manager.
- ❖ Professionalism and work attitude.

The survey does not go into depth and does not approach the topic of which character traits Account Managers display and if these should be kept or changed. Thus, the survey is not sufficient to give the Account Manager a view on which professional character traits are appreciated and which ones are not.

3.4 Opportunities for Awin Account Managers to improve character traits

Whether Awin offers opportunities to improve character traits or not for their employees says a lot about the perceived importance of character traits.

The most important and underlying question here, however plentiful or scarce opportunities offered are is if Account Managers believe these opportunities to be effective or not and what Awin Benelux could do to improve this if this is not the case.

The latter half of section 3 (Appendix A) was analyzed to investigate this question.

To start, it must be mentioned that no particular pattern was found in character traits Account Managers at Awin wish to improve.

Objectives and key results

Every quarter, each Account Manager at Awin has to set a personal OKR which enables them to work on the skills and character traits that they want to improve during the quarter. It is expected from each Account Manager to be proactive and take initiative on what they want to improve. The Account Manager's supervisor does not dictate what has to be improved upon. The manager is available for guidance and provides the tools for the Account Manager to be successful once the OKR is set.

⁴ Hereinafter referred to as NPS.

Even though the manager does not dictate what goals should be set, there is a certain level of pressure to have a relevant and attainable OKR to present to the manager. These OKRs are checked and evaluated during the aforementioned meeting points between manager and Account Manager. Having a system where this kind of freedom is given in choosing personal goals enables Account Managers to feel mature and respected by managers. A system where Account Managers are continually told what to do and which OKRs to pursue, would not provide this sense of independence and could lead to a lack of motivation from the Account Managers. Account Managers having the ability to set OKRs independently, but still being able to count on the guidance and mentorship of their respective managers provides them with a great environment to grow in. An OKR can be very diverse as it is personal to an individual's development. An OKR can be improving a certain character trait, making a project, or any other professional endeavor with relation to employment at Awin.

During Lucas Baart's (Account Manager) interview he stated his OKR for the first quarter of 2020, "I wanted to focus more on the strategic level. I wanted to give more strategic advice to advertisers because that is one of the ways you can grow from Account Development to Account Management" (Baart, 2020).

Training/ Awin Academy

Awin offers a lot of internal training opportunities, most of these are not mandatory so it is up to the Account Manager to grab the handles that Awin provides for personal growth. Training that Awin offers vary from purely work-oriented training that is held at the Awin office to character and soft skills training held at another location. The latter is referred to as training from the Awin Academy.

A downside to training from the Awin Academy is that they are quite infrequent and front-loaded, meaning training becomes redundant after a couple of years of employment at Awin. Furthermore, no Awin training provides certificates.

Lastly, Awin training does not cater to the individual and what an Account Manager personally wants to learn. To add to that no budget is allocated to Account Managers to pursue external training on subjects they want/need to improve.

In the workplace

The workplace is also regarded as a very good environment to improve character traits according to Awin Account Managers. A lot of the situations that Account Managers encounter cannot be simulated and need to be handled on the spot. Reflecting on what was learned and knowledge acquired during actual work helps Account Managers improve their skills and character traits. These situations are always different in real life and cannot always be conveyed in simple training. The pressure of being on the job also brings out the best from Account Managers as mistakes will be frowned upon, whereas in training this would not be the case.

Colleagues at Awin are also readily available for assistance if a character trait needs to be improved upon. Some Account Managers ask for help from colleagues that already have a higher level in the character trait that they want to improve. This colleague can then help the Account Manager develop this character trait by advising on what should or should not be done and how situations can be approached more effectively.

3.5 Character traits that make a successful Account Manager at Awin

This section is only looking for the most important character traits and is not looking to analyze further than that. Therefore, character traits that are not mentioned are not deemed as unimportant for an Account Manager. Besides looking at which character traits are selected most often, this question will also analyze which feminine and masculine traits are most important for Account Managers at Awin. The list that interviewees select from can be found in Appendix G where each character trait is categorized as either feminine or masculine.

The question being answered here is the following: ‘what character traits make a successful Account Manager at Awin?’ This is done by analyzing answers to question d of section 2 (appendix A).

The character traits by section will be mentioned in descending order. The count system that is used can be found in appendix H.

In total seventeen of the twenty-two character traits were selected at least once. The number between brackets next to each character trait indicates how many times it was selected.

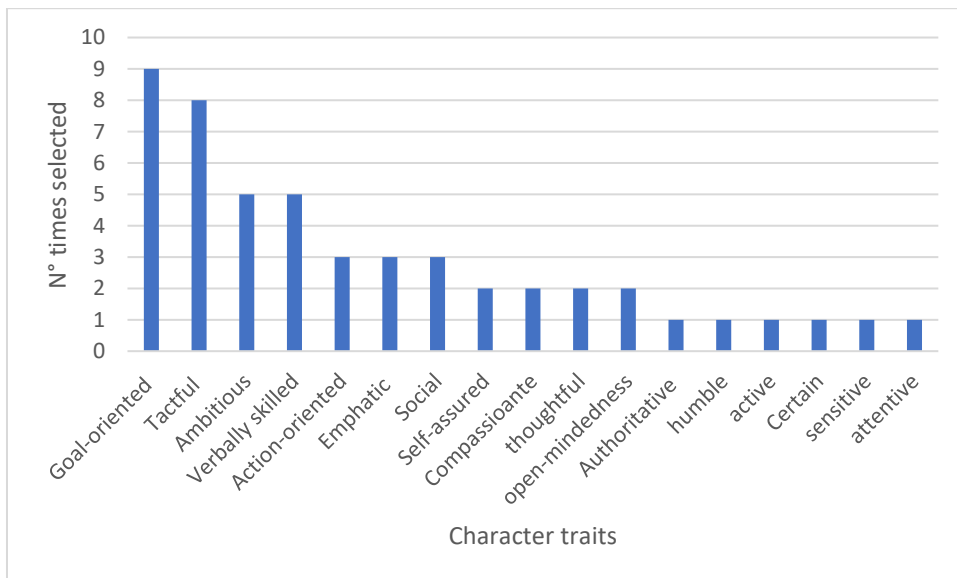


Figure 10: N° of times each character trait was selected

3.5.1 Feminine

Tactful (8)

An Account Manager needs to acknowledge what the client is saying to be able to ask the right questions and give the client the right options to move forward. This has to be done regardless of whether or not personalities match between both parties. An Account Manager should also be able to distinguish the different personalities that clients might have and approach them in their preferred way.

Unpopular decisions such as not working with certain publishers or not taking the account manager’s advice will sometimes be taken by clients, in those situations, it is important to react with care. Giving the client the feeling of being understood and approaching them with a better solution that will benefit them and Awin. These conversations can be difficult as both

parties see things differently, the way an Account Manager conveys the fact that he/she knows more about a certain topic is of great value as failure to do this appropriately will be detrimental to the relationship.

Verbally skilled (5)

The job of an Account Manager exists in connecting to a customer, which is mostly done by phone or Skype. This means that non-verbal communication is often non-existent when dealing with clients for this reason being verbally strong is important.

Choosing words wisely and knowing what to say and when to say something helps an Account Manager. One of the main tasks of an Account Manager is being able to sell ideas to their clients. A verbally skilled Account Manager can bring a clear message to clients which has a positive impact on persuasiveness.

Emphatic (3)

Account Managers should have the ability to empathize with clients otherwise misunderstandings may occur. This relates to the like factor, by having these skills clients will like the Account Manager more and make the relationship better in the long run. From this, mutual trust will emerge and everything that needs to be said will be said with more ease.

Social (3)

Having a connection with a client is an important part of the job as an Account Manager. For an Account Manager, it is advisable to show true colors from the beginning as this will improve the relationship with clients. Also, by the share number of people that an Account Manager comes in contact with every day it is indispensable to be social and have good social skills. This not only improves the connection between both parties, but it is also good for business.

Compassionate (2)

A compassionate Account Manager looks at how other parties feel, reassures them, and makes sure they feel comfortable talking about all problems that they are facing. This can range from problems in affiliate marketing to problems that the company is facing internally. When the other party can do this an Account Manager receives more information that enables them to provide thoughtful answers and opinions to clients.

Thoughtful (2)

Having a helicopter view on all parties involved and knowing how each decision influences all parties involved is important. Especially in difficult times for the client being thoughtful in communication and in giving advice is needed.

Humble (1)

Firstly, humbleness as an Account Manager can be seen as the ability to be patient and not get frustrated with clients if they make a mistake or do not understand the Account Manager's train of thought. This can be done by staying level-headed and actively looking for a solution instead of getting angry.

Secondly, humbleness can be felt in which Account Managers promote Awin's products. Clients that are in Awin's portfolio already chose Awin as a partner. There is thus no need to oversell the products that Awin offers because this does not benefit the business partner relationship.

Sensitive (1)

Sensitivity as an Account Manager enables humbleness and courageousness which are also character traits that could be chosen from.

3.5.1.1 HR-perspective

Tactful

The HR-person referred to tactfulness as the ability of an Account Manager to identify the question behind the question and say things at the right moment.

Sensitive and thoughtful

An Account Manager has to be sensitive and thoughtful when communicating with clients, but also when communicating with colleagues. Account Managers need to understand what internal and external clients are expecting from them and understand the underlying meaning of conversations. Both these character traits also encompass the ability to sense when communication is and is not needed.

3.5.2 Masculine

Goal-oriented (9)

Affiliate marketing is a performance-based sector. The return-on-investment per advertisement and other useful metrics are easy to find. This is why Account Managers working in the affiliate marketing sector should be goal-oriented when managing goals for clients, personal goals, and Awin's goals. Being goal-oriented also makes it easier for Account Managers to set relevant objectives that are in line with all parties involved. Tracking these objectives and measuring improvement can be done with the help of personal, client, and organizational Key Performance Indicators.

For Account Managers relationships and connections are important, but achieving goals always supersedes good relationships. If an Account Manager can perform up to standard and achieve all targets, no complaints will be made as this is the most important part of his/her job.

Ambitious (5)

In the affiliate marketing world and within Awin, there are numerous opportunities for growth. There is a predefined path to go from intern to key Account Manager in five steps at Awin. If the goal of an Account Manager is to grow within the company this can certainly be done by performing well. Great performances will ignite and enable promotion or potential new responsibilities to individual Account Managers.

Not being ambitious and working in the digital world do not go together. There is constantly room to improve and develop professionally as there are always innovations. If an Account Manager is not ambitious, he/she does not have the internal drive to grow and challenge the status quo.

Action-oriented (3)

An Account Manager can have the best of relationships with a client, but if that relationship is not translated into good business-performances, nothing will get done. There is always a need to grow revenue for the customer and at the end of the day, only this can truly keep a client satisfied. Every email that is received can have explicit or implicit action points that have to be completed. Taking action, thinking about the future, and actively searching for new opportunities is always appreciated by clients.

Self-assured (2)

Being self-assured and having the ability to persuade, sell an idea or an opportunity to client go hand in hand. If a proposition is given with confidence it is usually accepted more and the Account Manager comes over as a sincere business partner.

Open-minded (2)

The affiliate-marketing industry changes a lot, numerous new opportunities are available and these opportunities can be utilized in various ways. Looking at all options and thinking out of the box is essential when looking at how to approach opportunities for an Account Manager. This also enables a long-term view of things and how issues can be approached from different perspectives.

Authoritative (1)

In the relationship with a client, the Account Manager is the expert in the subject, and this is no different at Awin. Account Managers at Awin are aware of affiliate marketing and new developments in the sector. It is up to the Account Managers to persuade the clients and show authority in doing this. Clients can be hard-headed and reluctant to follow an Account Manager's proposition. When this occurs, it is up to the Account Managers to take a hard line when dealing with the client.

Active (1)

An Account Manager always has something to do. An Account Manager that only does things that come his way is not adopting the right attitude as there is always a client that could use some optimization, a client that can be called, or an opportunity to be taken.

Certain (1)

Certainty in saying things inspires confidence when dealing with other parties. This confidence and certainty trickle down to other aspects of being an Account Manager such as persuasiveness, being self-assured, and authoritativeness.

Attentive (1)

To understand the message another party is trying to convey Account Managers need to be attentive in conversations. An Account Manager needs to be able to sense things that are not explicitly being said by the other party and have a good idea of what can be done to solve this inquiry or problem. Even if the Account Manager is the smartest person in the room when it comes to affiliate marketing, attentiveness is key to come up with good solutions.

3.5.2.1 HR-perspective

Open-minded

The business that Awin finds itself in is constantly changing, in that sense, if an Account Manager is not open-minded this can be detrimental to his/her career. Ideas from peers, managers, and the organization should extrapolate the success of an Account Manager.

Goal-oriented

Starting with a clear goal in mind is always beneficial to Account Managers. At Awin Account Managers work with OKRs to keep goals top of mind.

3.6 Importance of each Big Five Personality Trait for an Awin Account Manager

How important each of The Big Five Personality Traits is for an Awin Account Manager is being uncovered here. This is done by analyzing question b of section 2 (appendix A).

The Big Five Personality traits are categorized as being either masculine or feminine. By letting Account Managers rank the personality traits that they believe to be the most important to least important, an analysis is made based on what type of personality traits are most commonly mentioned at the top and what personality traits are most commonly mentioned at the bottom. To assess, the importance of each character trait an overall ranking is made that synthesizes all provided rankings.

More information about the synthesis can be found in section 2 of appendix C and appendix I.

3.6.1 Account Managers perspective

Based on the aforementioned count system the personality traits are ranked and analyzed in order of importance according to Account Managers at Awin. The count system can be found in appendix I.

It is important to consider that all these personality traits are important for Account Managers. This research has been looking to find out which personality trait is the most important to Awin's Account Managers. Hence, the last personality trait can be considered the least important of the five, but cannot be considered unimportant.

Conscientiousness

The most important personality trait according to Account Managers at Awin is conscientiousness. As an Account Manager, it is important to have self-discipline and to be well organized. The workflow as an Account Manager is very uneven, Account Managers might have days where everything is going slow and they do not have a lot to do and then have days where everybody seems to need them for something. For these reasons using an agenda to have a structure in tasks to be performed is essential. Conscientiousness goes hand in hand with the ability to prioritize work for an Account Manager and managing the expectation that the client has.

An Account Manager receives a large amount of information from advertisers, but also internally. These are emails with additional information, things that have to be done, and steps that should be taken for an account. The inability to answer and act on these inquiries in a timely manner can be detrimental to an Account Manager's performance. This leaves an

Account Manager with a tight schedule that he/she has to be able to change when something more important needs to be done. When looking at the bigger picture, conscientiousness as an Account Manager makes the job easier. In a sense, it determines the daily structure and the ability to give added value to the clients.

Conscientiousness also enables Account Managers to create a well-documented relationship with the client. Looking at whether or not a proposition has already been proposed or not and making sure no stone remains unturned. Keeping track of this is essential to an Account Manager's success as making a proposition that has already been made in the past is unprofessional

Lastly, even though an Account Manager usually works in a team and has a manager that he/she can ask questions to, at the end of the day it all comes down to how well an Account Manager can handle his portfolio. There is high autonomy in the job as an Account Manager and it is up to the Account Manager to manage his workload.

This is what Account Manager, Justin Van Hilten had to say about conscientiousness during his interview, "From my perspective conscientiousness is the basis because it determines your daily structure and how you're doing the job. You have to be organized because without a good structure it is going to be a tough job and this (structuring) requires self-discipline. This (structuring) will determine how easy the job is going to be for you" (Van Hilten, 2020).

Emotional stability

After conscientiousness, the next personality trait that Awin Account Managers deemed to be the most important is emotional stability.

An Account Manager is a sort of consultant for the client, this means his/her expertise might be challenged and even ignored when communicating with a client. In these situations, it is important for Account Managers not to overreact when dealing with opposing opinions. Saying things in a tactful and understanding way is a plus point. As mentioned when talking about conscientiousness, the workload of an Account Manager is not evenly spread, during these stressful times Account Managers need to be able to keep their emotions in check and handle the situation with aplomb.

Keeping a certain level of professionalism and making sure everything is emotionally in balance can make the difference in the satisfaction of a client. An Account Manager is in contact with several people in parallel and it is always possible that people do not match in the Account Manager's way of thinking or attitudes in handling situations. In these types of situations, it is important to stay in the moment and keep in mind what the goal is and handle the matter with a masterstroke.

The moments of stress that an Account Manager encounters are defining. An Account Manager could do everything well most of the time, but if he/she tends to collapse under stressful situations that is what the client will remember the most. In the business of being an Account Manager, this will lead to significant losses for the company.

This is what Account Manager, Julia Rahimi Rigi had to say about emotional stability during her interview, "The first one would be emotional stability, from within you have to be all good, balanced, and zen to be able to do the rest. So if the inside is not working the outside won't work either" (Rahimi Rigi, 2020).

Agreeableness

The third most important personality trait according to Awin Account Managers is Agreeableness.

An Account Manager is very much in contact with people, may it be internal or external. Being warm and friendly towards these people and making sure that they have trust in the Account Manager as a business partner is essential. This can be done by being agreeable, but this is not the end all be all as clients do expect real results from their partnership. On the other hand, the added value that the Account Manager provides always starts by having a good connection with the clients.

Having a personal relationship and being able to have a small talk before having the actual business-related conversation is always more attractive. An Account Manager needs documents, responses, and time from several people, by having these good relationships an Account Manager can easily ask or request these things from other parties. This is also helpful when the Account Manager is not able to perform certain tasks, having good relationships will enable Account Managers to direct the expectations internally, but especially externally with more ease.

This is also where the like factor comes into play for Account Managers. An Account Manager has an easier time dealing with people if they are liked by those people. Even if all the right competencies are possessed by an Account Manager, not being liked by clients can create adversity. Creating relationships were skills and knowledge are not being accepted due to the lack of likeability.

Considering interactive styles can also help an Account Manager with the managing of relationships. Some people that an Account Manager talks to might have different ways of communicating that can be deemed as 'not nice'. Being able to stay respectful towards these people is very important as this might just be their natural way of communicating.

This is what Account Manager, Justin Van Hilten had to say about agreeableness during his interview, "We're working together with people. So, agreeableness, how warm, friendly, and tactful a person is, is really important as well. So I think that that comes in third because you want them to consider you as a business partner, but also as somebody that is trustworthy, that is a consultant, that is trying to help you and show you some new insights. I think the way to do that is by being warm friendly, yourself, and tactful" (Van Hilten, 2020).

Openness to new experiences

The second to last most important personality trait is openness to new experiences according to Account Managers at Awin.

Even though problems that Account Managers face with different clients might be similar, solutions often diverge as different clients have different goals in mind. Having an open mindset can ease the process of finding solutions to these issues.

Most clients appreciate an Account Manager's ability to be creative and come up with new opportunities. This encompasses the ability to come up with new ideas and looking at things from a different perspective. This may be ideas and perspectives that the Account Manager comes up with by himself, but ideas can also be provided by the team manager or peers.

For an Account Manager being cemented to a certain way of thinking can lead to stagnation in growth. There is a time where risks and new opportunities need to be taken to increase the revenue of a client, which in turn leads to extra revenue for Awin.

Challenging the status quo gets better results for both parties and shows engagement to the client. Sometimes, thinking out of the box is an effective way of tackling a problem that has no clear solutions. Being mindful with which clients out of the box ideas can and cannot be done is something to consider as well. Some clients like taking risks and looking into the future, whilst other clients prefer a more traditional approach and work in a risk-averse way.

Lastly, Awin operates in the affiliate marketing sector, this is a sector that is in constant development, new techniques and innovations are proposed regularly. New experiences and chances are in essence part of the job and failure to realize or acknowledge that will lead to lackluster performance.

This is what Account Manager, Jeannette de Haan had to say about openness to new experiences during her interview, “As an Account Manager, this openness can be seen in the solutions you provide, but also the way you communicate. As in agreeableness, I think that it is important that people respect your authority so that your new ideas are well received by the advertisers” (de Haan, 2020).

Extraversion

The least important personality trait according to Account Managers at Awin is extraversion.

Managing accounts is a commercial job, thus as an Account Manager making sure excitement is shown when clients are presented with findings or business reports can be well suited for moments of contact.

Taking the first step and being the one that contacts the advertiser is appreciated. Being proactive and approaching the client with advice or just a friendly talk can extrapolate the working relationship as it shows thoughtfulness from the Account Manager’s side.

Extraversion also helps with the creation of business relationships certainly if the person of the other party is extraverted as well. Being able to adjust to people that are less extraverted and more laid-back in their way of communicating is important as not everyone likes to be approached in similar ways.

Here is what Account Manager, Ivan Telg had to say about extraversion during his interview, “You should always have a small chat with a person (before business). Some people give you a lot of energy and some people just are more introverted. So, in that way, the energy is quite different and the conversation styles quite different” (Telg, 2020).

3.6.2 HR-perspective

Agreeableness

From HR-perspective agreeableness is ranked as first because it shows one’s ability to fit in a team.

Openness to new experiences

The job as an Account Manager is very dynamic, having everything under control usually does not last long, things can change or come along at any moment. An Account Manager needs to be able to adapt to these situations swiftly. If Account Managers do not do this, they will be swept off their feet.

Emotional stability

The job as an Account Manager demands a lot, with both colleagues and clients expecting things from them. It is important to stay level-headed and not to take anything personally.

Conscientiousness

An Account Manager should have self-starting abilities within Awin. It is not uncommon for Account Managers to have a learning period, but there comes a moment when Account Managers should be able to explore and suggest new possibilities by themselves.

Extraversion

At Awin there are extraverted and non-extraverted Account Managers that have similar work results. Extraversion is not believed to have much of an impact on performance. On a professional level, Account Managers are able to be extraverted when dealing with clients, but there is no need to become more extraverted if that is not how the Account Manager is as a person.

3.7 Case study

The case study aims to conclude if the Account Managers are goal-oriented or relationship-oriented. It is expected that the questions will be hard to answer and that they will provide great insights into the thought process of the interviewees. To answer this the case study (appendix E) is thoroughly analyzed.

Of the ten Account Managers that answered the case study, five would meet with advertiser X, three would meet with advertiser Y, one would meet with advertiser X and Y, and one would require more information to make a decision.

Reasons for choosing advertiser X

Five of the ten Account Managers selected advertiser X, this illustrated that they are relationship-oriented.

Because advertiser X's revenue is decreasing it is important to stay on top of the situation. Furthermore, they have been at Awin for ten years, so this means that advertiser X has potential when it comes to affiliate marketing. Advertiser X is going through a tough period and needs immediate help to revamp their affiliate program.

Losing advertiser X is currently the biggest threat, advertiser Y is making a lot of money and will not be looking to part ways with Awin directly.

This is what Account Manager, Justin Van Hilten had to say about his selection during his interview, "Yes, I would have the meeting on Friday with (advertiser) X because they've been with Awin for 10 years and they're going through a tough period. I think it's the same as if you reflect it to your social life, if you have a friend for 10 years whose girlfriend broke up with

him, and he is not feeling okay then you spend time with him first. The new girl that you met, and you're in love with, you can see her next week as well. I think it's important that when there's a problem, or there's an issue that is more important than optimizing the good stuff” (Van Hilten, 2020).

Reasons for choosing advertiser Y

Three of the ten Account Managers selected advertiser Y, this illustrates that they are goal-oriented.

Because client Y is making a lot of revenue right now they can immediately and exponentially grow within Awin if they are catered to in the right way. When looking at the Growth-Share matrix they are in the star position so they are currently important to the company.



Figure 11: Growth-Share matrix

The ten-year relationship with advertiser X also has a stronger bond, this enables Account Managers to be more flexible with them because they know each other better. If the client has been working with Awin for ten years it also means that there is trust from the advertiser that solutions will be given and that they do not have to worry. With new advertisers that are bringing in a lot of revenue this relationship is more fragile, so they have to be catered to a bit more, certainly in the beginning. A good first impression might be key to a long and good relationship, as advertiser Y is new to working with Awin rescheduling might not be appreciated.

Reasons for choosing advertiser X and Y

This is what Account Manager, Jeanette de Haan had to say about her choice during her interview, “I would manage to get them both on Friday even if it means working longer hours, especially if it is urgent. I think if something is urgent you should be flexible. The advertisers know that it is asking something from you and that is good for the relationship. They know you are doing what you can do and that they count on you as an Account Manager. That makes the collaboration way better” (de Haan, 2020).

Reason for requesting more information

This is what Account Manager, Puck Smaal had to say about her choice during her interview, “The first question is why is the meeting so urgent for both of them? What is the urgency? Is it a task that I should do? Is it a task that I should do this Friday? Or can it be on Monday? Is it a task that somebody else could do? Is it a task that they can split up and where I can work together with somebody else so that we can both assist the advertisers? That's what comes up in my mind. I can't tell you based on this information because I don't know what the urgency is” (Smaal, 2020).

4 Conclusion – The art of being an Account Manager

This Bachelor Project aimed to research which masculine and feminine character traits make successful Account Managers, with a focus on Awin Benelux. The collection of relevant data enabled the successful fruition of this project and here is what was concluded.

Awin is a masculine company with a lot of feminine values. At the end of the day all actions undertaken are with the sole goal of creating an environment that encourages and stresses success. This is illustrated with a lot of work pressure and Awin's constant quest to be number one in their industry.

There is no clear pre-defined path to being a successful Account Manager. Different Awin Account Managers approach tasks, clients, and responsibilities in various ways and still find ways to be successful. Being an Account Manager is an art and it is up to each individual to find how they best approach this art. Awin having extraverted and introverted Account Managers that bring in similar results is a great illustrator of how different approaches can still lead to a win. This also reflects what Awin represents, a place where all personalities are welcome and accepted. These differences help the company excel in all aspects as various minds view things from different perspectives.

The evidence that different types of people can make good Account Managers is also reflected in the fact that HR does not search for any specific character or personality traits when looking for potential Account Managers. Broader subjects such as being a team player and being a self-starter are looked at.

Nevertheless, there are character traits that predict the success of an Account Manager. Neither masculine, nor feminine character traits predict greater success as an Account Manager, and both play a consequential role in different ways. An equal number of feminine and masculine character traits were selected in the multiple-choice question that asked Account Managers to choose five character traits that they believed made a successful Account Manager.

When it comes to The Big Five Personality Traits, feminine personalities are most important according to Awin Account Managers with conscientiousness leading the way. The two other feminine personality traits, emotional stability, and agreeableness follow in the ranking.

HR has openness to new experiences, one of the masculine personality traits in the second position, but feminine traits remain more important as extraversion, the other masculine personality trait ranks in last.

There is a clear disparity when comparing findings of The Big Five Personality Traits in the field research and the findings by Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala that can be found in the desk research. Mahlamäki, Uusitalo, & Ojala have extraversion as the personality trait that predicts the best performance for an Account Manager. This goes further in showcasing that Account Managers can take different paths and get similar results.

Developing these character traits and personality traits go hand in hand with getting feedback and having opportunities to improve them. A lot of feedback is given, this is done continuously, but also at predefined moments that are set during the course of the year. This includes team meetings, one-on-ones with the manager, quarterly meetings, etc. Feedback by peers is also given but is believed to be less effective and useful by some Account Managers.

It is believed that not all Awin Account Managers have the ability to give and take feedback from peers as they do not receive training on this matter. When it comes to the opportunities to improve upon character and personality traits, Awin also provides various avenues. Options within and outside the office are offered, but they are always provided by Awin, meaning no budget is allocated to personal training endeavors.

Objectives and key results are a big part of Awin's culture, OKRs are set from company level all the way down to individual level. It is not surprising that being goal-oriented, a masculine character trait was the most selected character trait among Awin Account Managers in the multiple-choice question. Conscientiousness, a feminine personality trait, is the most important of The Big Five Personality Traits. When being goal-oriented it helps to be conscientious as having discipline and being able to structure work will facilitate the achievement of goals.

Notwithstanding, the high regard for goal-orientation at Awin, relationship-orientation with clients, which is a feminine character trait remains paramount. The case study shows this as more Account Managers choose to meet with a client that they have a longer-lasting relationship with over a client that is making a lot of revenue, which ultimately is the goal.

4.1 Recommendations

This research has showcased that there is an inherent benefit to Account Managers investigating and delving deeper into the thought of what character traits actually make them good at their job. Account Managers appreciated the chance to talk about this and some even said that the interview would help them when operating in their work-life.

For these reasons, Awin must take the time to educate their Account Managers about the character traits that are important according to their Account Managers that were found during field research. This can be done with the aid of this research, which can then be fine-tuned for the best usage within the company.

When it comes to feedback, peers should be able to take and receive good feedback from each other. This is important as Account Managers can easily learn from one another which is very useful as they have the same position in the company. This will create a willingness to accept and act on feedback that will benefit Awin.

Feedback is of no use if it cannot be acted upon. For Account Managers to act on this feedback more personal training is needed that tackle the character traits they personally want to work on. This can be done by allocating a budget per capita for training and creating an environment where Account Managers can talk about the character traits that they are working on and receive feedback on that.

4.1.1 Proposition for Awin - Education on character traits

For Awin Account Managers to be more involved and aware of character traits it would be useful for current and new Awin Account Managers to read the following sections:

- ❖ Which character traits make a good Account Manager.
- ❖ Importance of each Big Five Personality Trait for an Awin Account Manager.
- ❖ Case Study.

Furthermore, the interviews can also give great insights into what character traits are and how Awin Account Managers approach them. It can be interesting for current and new Account Managers to view these interviews as they get to see things from another perspective and delve deeper into thought. All interviews can be viewed on this website:

<https://obinnagrantsite.com/website>

4.1.2 Proposition for Awin - Feedback

To enhance the feedback and the way feedback is given it would be useful to train employees on how to give feedback and then proceed by enforcing peer feedback sessions at regular intervals.

This can be done in the following way:

1. Each Account Manager at Awin finds two or three peers that want to work on the same character trait that he/she wants to work on. This can be streamlined by software such as Microsoft Teams.
2. During this predefined period, each Account Manager will write down highs and lows in relation to that specific character trait.
3. After the period is over, all the Account Managers that selected the same character trait come together to discuss the highs and lows, to learn from mistakes, and give advice to each other.

This creates a perpetual stream of feedback where Account Managers have to be involved in the process. Thanks to the training on feedback they would have received beforehand they will know the basics of giving good feedback and continuously improve this by giving feedback to peers at regular intervals. The fact that Account Managers only have to give feedback on one character trait makes it easier for them as well.

Lastly, this will create an environment where Account Managers look forward to receiving and giving feedback as it will benefit Account Managers directly.

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5 Appendices

5.1 Appendix A – Interview guide (Account Managers)

Section 1: Introduction

- a. Explain the purpose of the interview.
- b. Explain the format of the interview.
- c. Indicate how long the interview usually takes.
- d. Ask them if they have any questions.
- e. Is it ok if I record this interview?
- f. Can you introduce yourself?
- g. How long have you been working at Awin?
- h. What is your current position at Awin and what does it entail?

Section 2: Work performance (based on character traits)

- a. Name 3 character traits that best describe you at work.
- b. When evaluating yourself which of the following personality traits would you consider most and least important. Please rank from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important) and explain why you chose this ranking
 - i. Emotional stability: a person's ability to remain stable and balanced
 - ii. Conscientiousness: How self-disciplined and organized a person is.
 - iii. Openness to new experiences: How open-minded and authority-challenging a person is.
 - iv. Agreeableness: How warm friendly and tactful a person is.
 - v. Extraversion: How out-going and social a person is.
- c. In your own opinion, what makes/characterizes a good Account Manager at Awin?
- d. I will send you a list of character traits through the chat function. Please select the 5 character traits that according to you make a good Account Manager at Awin + for each one explain why. Authoritative, tactful, certain, open-minded, debonair, sensitive, self-assured, humble, caring, thoughtful, goal-oriented, compassionate, protective, social, easy-going, outgoing, ambitious, attentive, active, empathetic, action-oriented, verbally skilled.

Section 3: feedback and improvement of character traits

- a. Which traits would you personally like to improve on and why?
- b. Have you ever received (positive or negative) feedback at work on your professional character traits?
 - i. If yes, from whom (team leader, colleagues, HR, ..?). Was this once or does this occur frequently? What was the occasion (for example a performance review)? Was this feedback mainly positive or negative?
 - ii. If no, would you like to receive this kind of feedback? How would you like to receive feedback on this? Why? How often would you like to receive feedback on this? Why?
- c. Were you given the opportunity to work on (improve) your (professional) personality and character traits?
- d. If so, through which medium were you able to improve on this? Was this effective?

- e. What advice would you give to a new Account Manager or yourself at the beginning of your career at Awin?

Section 4: Awin's personality

- a. If Awin were a person, how would you describe this person (male/ female? Look? Personality? ..)
- b. What advice would you give to Awin regarding professional development? What are they already doing well and what could go better?
- c. What do you like about the work floor and force at Awin?

Section 5: general work performance

- a. What is the hardest and easiest part of your job?
- b. What is the most important part of your job?

5.2 Appendix B – Interview guide (HR-specific)

Good morning, today I will be interviewing you about your hiring process of Account Managers and the character traits you search for in new Account Managers.

So when answering the questions try to refer to Account Managers as much as possible and not Awin Benelux staff in general

Introduction

- ❖ Is it ok if I record this interview?
- ❖ Explain purpose of interview.
- ❖ Explain the interview format.
- ❖ Indicate how long the interview usually takes.
- ❖ Can you introduce yourself?
- ❖ How long have you been working at Awin?
- ❖ What is your current position at Awin and what does it entail?

Hiring process

- ❖ Name 3 characteristics that you look for in the hiring process of an Account Manager.
- ❖ Do Account Managers get more information about the personality or characteristic traits that are expected from them after they are hired?
- ❖ Do Account Manager have to take a test before being taken into employment?
- ❖ Are their characteristic traits that usually end in the non-employment of a potential Account Manager?
- ❖ When evaluating Account Managers which of the following personality traits would you consider most and least important. Please rank from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important) and explain why you chose this ranking
 - Emotional stability: a person's ability to remain stable and balanced
 - Conscientiousness: How self-disciplined and organized a person is.
 - Openness to new experiences: How open-minded and authority-challenging a person is.
 - Agreeableness: How warm friendly and tactful a person is.
 - Extraversion: How out-going and social a person is.
- ❖ In your own opinion, what makes/characterizes a good Account Manager at Awin?

- ❖ I will send you a list of characteristics through the chat function. Please select the 5 characteristics that according to you make a good Account Manager at Awin + for each one explain why. Authoritative, tactful, certain, open-minded, debonair, sensitive, self-assured, humble, courageous, thoughtful, goal-oriented, compassioante, protective, social, easy-going, outgoing, ambitious, attentive, active, emphatic, action-oriented, verbally skilled.
- ❖ Is there any feedback given on the professional traits during their employment?
 - If yes, from whom (team leader, colleagues, HR, ..?) gives it. Was this once or does this occur frequently? What was the occasion (for example a performance review)? Is this feedback mainly positive or negative?
 - If no, do you think there is any benefit in giving this kind of feedback? Would you like to implement this kind of feedback? How and often would you like to give this feedback? Why?
- ❖ Are there any opportunities for Account Managers to improve their (professional) personality and character traits?
 - If so, through which medium? Do you believe this to be effective?
- ❖ What advice would you give to a new Account Manager starting his career at Awin?
- ❖ If Awin were a person, how would you describe this person (male/ female? Look? Personality? ..)
- ❖ What advice would you give to Awin regarding professional development? What are they already doing well and what could go better?

Now, I will be asking you some questions relating to the job as an Account Manager and how you think an Account Manager should handle a fictional situation. I know you are HR and this might not be that simple, but it will give me a great idea of what you and Awin look for in an Account Manager.

- ❖ What is the hardest and easiest part of an Account Manager's job?
- ❖ What is the most important part of their job?
- ❖ What do you think Account Managers and employees like the most about Awin's work floor and force?

5.3 Appendix C – Hypotheses and expectations

Section 1: Introduction

- a. A short explanation of why the interview is taking place is given.
- b. The structure of the interview is given and which type of answers are expected from interviewees.
- c. Informing interviewees of how much time the interview is expected to take.
- d. The interviewee is asked if he has any questions before the interview starts. This to clear any ambiguities the interviewee might have.
- e. Now, that the interviewee is informed about the reason for the interview asking if it is allowed to be recorded is required to adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation. (Hitinterview, 2019)
- f. A short introduction to humanize the interview and enabling the storage of the interview by name. Having the names of interviewees is also important for sourcing.
- g. How long the interviewee has been working at Awin.

- h. Denoting which from the afro-mentioned teams of Account Managers the interviewee belongs to or if he/she is an HR person.

Section 2: Work performance (based on character traits)

- a. The Account Managers giving character traits that they believe describe them at work gives an overview of how they perceive their job. Also, this showcases what the clients expect from an Account Manager from Awin. The character traits that the Account Manager mentions are categorized with appendix G. For the character traits that are not in appendix G, more research is done for categorization.
- b. The big five personality traits are categorized as being masculine or feminine. By letting Account Managers rank the personality traits that they believe to be the most important, an analysis can be done on what type of personality traits are most commonly mentioned at the top and what personality traits are most commonly mentioned at the bottom. To asses, the importance of each character trait an overall ranking is made that synthesizes all provided rankings.

Assessment is done as follows: each position on the ranking is assigned a numerical point. All the points for a specific character trait are added together to give the character trait a final point. After this, a final ranking is made where the most important character traits according to Account Managers at Awin can be viewed, and also if this is masculine or feminine character traits have more importance. Points system:

- ❖ First place = 1 point;
 - ❖ second place = 0.8 points;
 - ❖ third place = 0.6 points;
 - ❖ fourth place 0.4 points;
 - ❖ fifth place = 0.2 points.
- c. Finding out what Account Managers admire when looking at peers gives another perspective to a question similar to question 2a. Mentioned character traits are categorized with appendix G if this is not possible further research is done. This question also opens-up the mind of the interviewee as the next question will be about Account Managers at Awin in general, whilst the two previous questions were about how they view and evaluate themselves.
 - d. Every time a character trait is selected it receives one point, as no ranking has to be made. Because Interviewees do not have to rank each character trait some character traits will end with a null score. So, this question is only looking for the most important character traits and is not looking to analyze further than that. Therefore, character traits with a null score are not deemed as being unimportant for an Account Manager. Besides looking at which character traits are selected most often, this question will also analyze which feminine and masculine traits are most important for an Account Manager at Awin. The list that interviewees select from can also be found in appendix G where each character trait is categorized as feminine or masculine.

Section 3: feedback and improvement of character traits

- a. This question is introductory to this next set of questions as we move from work performance to feedback questions. It is expected from every Account Manager to

- give a character trait that they would like to improve. Answers to this question will analyze if mostly feminine or masculine character traits want to be improved by Awin Account Managers. This question will also assess if there is a pattern in which character traits Account Managers at Awin want to improve. If this is the case something will have to be done by Awin to improve that particular character trait.
- b. Working out if Awin gives feedback on character traits discerns if Awin is conscious about character traits and gives importance to them.
 - i. This follow-up question where a positive answer is given to the main question enables us to delve deeper into feedback that Account Managers receive at Awin. This gives an image of the importance given to the feedback given on character traits. If feedback is given frequently this means that Awin finds that talking about and improving character traits is important. Furthermore if the type of feedback that is given analyzes if Awin Account Managers have more negative or positive reinforcement.
 - ii. This follow-up question where a negative answer is given to the main question enables us to delve deeper into the want and need for feedback on character traits for Account Managers at Awin. This question is useful for the potential recommendations; on giving feedback that can be provided to Awin. If a lot of Account Managers want to receive feedback on these character traits it will prove that Awin Benelux has a lackluster performance in the giving of feedback and the improvement of Account Managers' improvement in character traits.
 - c. Whether Awin offers opportunities to improve the character traits or not for their employees says a lot about the perceived importance of character traits.
 - d. Analyzing which mediums (ex. training, case study, video material,...) are used for the professional development of Awin Account Managers is useful information to have. Also, it looks at what different Account Managers consider as training. The most important part of this question is if Account Managers believe this training to be effective or not and what Awin Benelux could do to improve this if this is not the case. If Account Managers believe these mediums to be effective this means Awin is doing a good job when it comes to character improvement opportunities. Otherwise, Awin could use some recommendations when it comes to character trait improvement mediums.
 - e. "Observations on the past create opportunities for the future" (Waite & Lyons, 2013). This retrospective question opens the mind of the Account Manager to things they might have done differently and now notice. This encourages them to look at what they learned from their experience as an Account Manager. The character traits that they mention are categorized as feminine and masculine. Due to the retrospective aspect of this question Account Manager gave answers that they believe an Account Manager should have, this gives insight on what they believe character trait makes a good Account Manager. (Waite & Lyons, 2013)

Section 4: Awin's personality

- a. The personality given to Awin will be categorized as feminine or masculine according to the table in appendix G. Account managers can describe their work environment based on character trait this will showcase if the Account Managers' work environment at Awin is masculine or feminine.

- b. If mostly feminine character traits are given as points of improvement this means Awin has to get more in touch with their feminine side and vice versa. Positive points should be maintained. What Awin is doing well and what Awin could do better will be analyzed in the search of possible patterns in the answers given.
- c. What interviewees like about Awin’s work floor can also be added to the points that Awin is already doing well in the previous question. A part of the answers is categorized and viewed as feminine and masculine traits that Account Managers like about Awin.

Section 5: general work performance

- a. The character traits that are needed for the hardest and easiest tasks of an Account Manager’s job were mentioned during the interviews or are easy to find as descriptions of the hardest and easiest task are vivid.
- b. The character traits that are needed for the most important task of an Account Manager’s job were mentioned during the interviews or are easy to find as descriptions of the most important tasks are very detailed.

Section 6: HR-specific

- a. If Awin does not give any type of information about character traits this would mean that no importance is given to specific character traits. If Awin does give information about the character traits they search for in an Account Manager this would mean that Awin does give importance to character traits in the hiring process of an Account Manager.
- b. This question analyzes if there is a specific personality trait that Awin searches for when looking for an Account Manager. This would again assess the importance that Awin gives to character traits when looking for an Account Manager. This also assesses if character traits are important when hiring an Account Manager.
- c. Analyzing if there is the ability to pinpoint a character trait that would end in the non-employment of a potential Account Manager.

5.4 Appendix D – Types of questions

Credential verification questions: These questions have the objective of checking if the interviewee has the correct background and position at Awin for the interview. (Collegegrad, 2020)

Section 1	f,g,h
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Table 3: Credential verification question

Dichotomous questions: Close-ended questions, commonly referred to as ‘yes/no’ questions (Types of Questions: Sample Question Types with Examples, 2020).

Section 1	e
Section 3	b,c
Section 6	a,b,c

Table 4: Dichotomous questions

Multiple choice questions: Question where the interviewee selects one or multiple responses from a predefined list (Types of Questions: Sample Question Types with Examples, 2020).

Section 2	d
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Table 5: Multiple choice questions

Rank order scaling question: Questions where the interviewee is asked rank from most important to least important (Types of Questions: Sample Question Types with Examples, 2020).

Section 2	b
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Table 6: Rank order scaling question

Open-ended questions: Gives the interviewee to give a free-form answer (Farrell, 2016).

Section 1	f,g,h
Section 2	a,c
Section 3	a,bI,bII, c, d, e
Section 4	a,b,c
Section 5	a,b

Table 7: Open-ended questions

5.5 Appendix E – Case study

Advertiser X has been a very good advertiser for Awin for the last 10 years but hasn't been able to get the revenue stream running during this period. On the other hand, you have advertiser Y that is new to the Awin affiliate program and is making a lot of revenue. They both ask for an urgent meeting on Friday.

Questions

- ❖ Who would you meet and who would you reschedule for the following week? Why?
- ❖ Do you believe this is in line with company values and what your manager expects from you?

With the first question, the aim is to conclude if the Account Managers are goal-oriented or relationship-oriented. Answering that advertiser X will be prioritized for a meeting on Friday hypothetically conveys that relationships are more important than the goal which is to make more revenue. On the contrary, choosing to meet advertiser Y will convey that the goal of making revenue and profit is more important.

Because being relationship-oriented is a feminine character trait, whilst being goal-oriented is a masculine character trait this will help answer the questions that relate to this topic.

Interviewees that refuse to choose between advertiser X and Y due to lack of information are categorized as thoughtful which is a feminine character trait. Interviewees that decide to have both meetings are categorized as ambitious which is a masculine character trait.

It is expected that the questions will be hard to answer and that they will provide great insights into the thought process of the interviewees. Because there is no right or wrong interviewees will have to reinforce their answers and give the reason for not choosing the other option.

5.6 Appendix F – Transcribed interviews

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Jeanette de Haan

Date: Wednesday the 15th of April 2020

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

My name is Jeanette de Haan, I live in Utrecht and was born and raised in Utrecht. I came to Utrecht for my study.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

Since July last year, I started working for Awin. (10 months)

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Key Account Manager. An Account Manager is the point of contact between the advertisers and the publishers. The difference between a key Account Manager and a normal Account Manager has to do with the service level. In the key account team, we mainly focus on the bigger clients, who would like more service, analyses, and more of our time.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

Like to communicate with people

Solution thinking (oriented), I think it is always important to be able to find the best solutions for your clients.

Emphatic, I think that is an important one.

Another one that I would add is a strategic mindset: for the short term, but also for the long-term as advertisers want the value for their money by increasing their revenue.

Persuasive, so that the advertisers know what Awin brings to the table. You really have to be the link between the different parties

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

1. Agreeableness, I believe in the like factor. I think if people like you as a person you will get more things. It might seem a bit odd to put agreeableness on one. I think people that have all the competencies to do the job right can get less results

because they are not likable or loved by the other party. So, the skills and knowledge are not accepted by the other party.

2. Openness to new experiences, I think you are constantly seeking for the best results for both parties and in order to that, you need to be open-minded. There is a need to go away from the things you always do if you do everything the same way everyday all day. I think to get the best results you need to open your way of thinking and think outside the box. As an Account Manager this openness can be seen in the solutions you provide, but also the way you communicate. As in agreeableness, I think that it is important that people respect your authority. So that you new ideas are well received by the advertisers.
3. Emotional stability, especially in stressful situations where there is conflict or contract negotiations it harms the business if an Account Manager or a coworker is not able to remain stable.
4. I think in a normal way of life it is good to have some discipline and to be well organized, I think it makes the job easier. I am not the best-organized person in the world so in order to do the job the best I can set some rules and make use of my agenda to get a bit of structure and organize certain things. But I also see that it is not necessary to have everything perfectly organized. It is good to prioritize, I think that is an important one because if you are able to prioritize your work you will notice that the organization will be done correctly for the highly important things. I am very good at expectation management.
5. Extraversion, for the advertiser I don't think that it is important that you are extroverted. It is nice on special occasion. What we do see I think that the collaboration between Account Managers is better between extroverted types (of people), because they are more outgoing and social, love to get in touch with each other, exchange experiences and information. I think in that manner it is a good one. But as a contact act person for an account it depends character traits of the other person.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIR, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

- ❖ Emphatic, I think if you can't empathize with your clients you have a problem.
- ❖ Self-assured, it is good to have a clear view on the feelings of another, but if you are not self-assured people will feel it and know it and will doubt your decisions. It does not need to mean that you have a big ego or that you lie on the edge, but it is good to be self-assured.
- ❖ If Awin has a product that a competitor does not have I won't be humble about it, but I will not oversell it, more like something in between.
- ❖ Social, during the whole corona crisis, it was really nice to have some social talks with your advertisers and it is also good for business.
- ❖ Action-oriented, is something that is important as well. You can be super social and talk about private life and business, but if it is not action-oriented what will be done? I think I am also action-orientated in my personal life. I really notice that

my advertisers like that because it is thinking forward and always being able to find new opportunities or think positively for the future.

- ❖ I am in doubt between thoughtful and tactful. I think thoughtful, or a combination of those two. I think it is important, especially in difficult situations, like a company that is being harmed the corona crisis for example, or publishers who are being affected by this. Sometimes quite unpopular measures are being taken (by advertisers). It is super important to react to them tactfully, to give the person the feeling that you do understand the situation and it would be thoughtful to come with a solution, an extra e-mail, a postcard or whatsoever

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Well, the structure and organization and is still in continuous improvement because it is not something that I was born with. It is useful to have it, sometimes you notice that by the lack of your planning and organization there will be some questions from the advertiser. Luckily I do have many other competencies and manage that quite good and will provide a solution within a few hours. Everything is fine then so the other competencies compensate for the lack of organization. It is definitely something I would like to work on. Plan to-do a French course as well, but my English will come first.

Also, I notice that the communication with my Dutch advertisers which is 80 percent of my portfolio is way easier because of the Dutch directness, and the Dutch language. I also have on my to-do list to improve my English for the Belgian advertisers.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

Well Thomas is my manager and he is very positive, so that is really nice. Daniel is our team coordinator and he is helping me become more organized and become a well-structured person. He told me he was the same before and I had no idea how bad it was back then. I see how good it is now so that is really helping me to set up working agreements. It is not any negative feedback, but more to provide me some help to get better at it. I think the best thing in all this is that the expectation is not that I will be the most organized person in Awin as they really tend to look at the nice competencies you already have and make good use of them.

The nice thing with this is that it is a meeting to be more structural, so we started by planning it once a month. We discussed the performance of my advertisers and learning goals. So it is an hour once a month.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS?

Definitively!

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Normally you see that people that are super structured, such as one of my friends always has been. I think the moment she was born she was structured and set to do everything by the nice set of rules. You see that a person like her is teaching other people to create a structure. It is easy for her to say how to do it as she was born with those competencies. I think for Daniel it was the same like me, and he understands the process of going from unstructured to structured. To be honest, it is not his best competence and it does not need and that is really nice that you can work on it but you do not have to become the authority (best) in it.

What advice would you give to a new Account Manager or yourself at the beginning of your career AT AWIN?

I think it good to haven enough meetings with your manager and your buddy (mentor) and create a good relationship with them. That really helped me and just take it slow and take your time to take in all the information in. Because it is hard to get all the Awin information, regarding the work you have to do and your accounts. Work on your competences at the same time. The job interview and the case you have to make give the managers a really good impression of how you as an Account Manager. I think an Account Manager needs to embrace that and have the confidence that they are hired for a reason. To resume being proactive and patient.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

Gender-neutral and awesome, empathetic, positive mindset, and tactful.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

The thing that could be better is something that I mentioned before in the council and the brainstorm session is the training possibilities. For now, it is only possible to follow the trainings which are being provided by Awin itself, I would like to see that there is a personal budget for trainings for your own personal development. My example would be: I would like to follow a course in English with other persons (not colleagues). Because it is my point of development and I would like to work on that. It would be great that I can follow such a course. But if brook (a colleague) would like to improve her excel skills she can join an excel training. Of course, there are some trainings given at Awin, but before working here I worked for NCOI which is an education company and the difference in the trainings that are being given is extreme. I believe in continuous learning, it is good for your motivation

I think what Awin is already doing good and why I find it awesome is because it is a positive company. They look at what is going good instead of only seeking for things that need improvement. I would advice Awin to maintain this positive mindset even during these crazy corona times they are still being so positive, empathetic and tactful. I think Awin meets a lot of the mindset that you mentioned before. Because I have worked for companies where they say this is our mission and vision, but on a daily basis you do not feel that. You do not feel the goal of a company and I think that a strength of Awin is that it really those create the ambiance which it says it does.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The easiest part is when a program is running smoothly, you just have to be social and yourself and it is gaining money in the meantime.

The hardest thing is when a business needs to be downsized or contract negotiations. When things are not running smoothly to make sure to still get the best results and that is sometimes a challenge. It really needs some thinking, talking with different parties and especially the decision is not being made by the contact person, but by a manager or the manager of the manager. Minimizing losses and making sure they are not too high. Also if there Sometimes a contact person is different than you, there could be some friction, how to build the relationship again. My biggest challenge for now is the Belgian market. I have the Dutch and Belgian (Advertiser, same company different location). It is interesting to see how both parties are reacting differently to the corona crisis. The Dutch one is more open and because they are more open it is nice to work together towards a solution. You really feel like you are on the same side. With the Belgian one, I need to work very hard to get the same information and to get us on the same page. It succeeds eventually, but I find it a challenge to get to the same point with them. Especially because it is easier for me to say they are annoying. Obviously as an Account Manager you cannot say that and I believe it is not ok to think it. But it is a challenge as it is your first natural reaction. It is just easier to communicate with people that are similar to you

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

Build a good relationship with your contact person and their companies.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK?
WHY?

To be honest I would manage to get them both on Friday. Is it super urgent, I mean Friday is a long day I would propose timeframes for both x and y. Even for Friday evening. If it is urgent it urgent and urgent situations are not very common. So, I think if one occurs you should be flexible on that. It would be different if this situation occurred every week, then it would be a problem with your structure and organization. I would manage to get them both on Friday even if it means working longer hours. Especially if it is urgent. I think if something is urgent you should be flexible. The advertisers know that it is asking something from you and that is good for the relationship. They know you are doing what you can do and that they count on you as an Account Manager. That makes the collaboration alter on way better.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

I hope he expects this from me! I think because he would have done the same. Also, Awin is quite flexible, if you work a few hours more on Friday it is fine that you start later on Monday if you do not have any meetings.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

Have you missed something or something that I need to explain better?

No.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Ivan Telg

Date: Wednesday the 15th of April

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

I am, Ivan, I am 27, years old. I am an Account Manager within the account development team, and I have been working at Awin for one year, and four months. My job entails providing information, strategic help, and also optimizing and starting new accounts.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

Focus, From the perspective of a client, is really looking at okay, what does a client need, how much effort do they need what stage are they in are they growing, are they looking at, for example, expanding or are they in the starting phase and are they really looking to make that first step within affiliate. If I'm looking at focus in more of a perspective of me working. I'm really focused in on one certain thing to make sure that it's done perfectly or at least as good as possible. If we're looking at it from a perspective of I'm trying to focus in on making sure that everything goes well and that the information that I provide to customers is correct. If I'm working with a publisher that the information that I provide from the advertiser could actually be the same as the advertiser communicating to a publisher in general.

Continuous optimization & efficiency, Well, in general, what we do within Awin we have the gap analysis. So in general, what we do is we look at the information that is provided the type of publishers, we're looking at the numbers, we are looking at them compared to a competitor or differentiator. What is it that makes it better for one brand compared to the other brand. What works with them and doesn't work with the advertiser that we're trying to make better by getting more sales, getting more clicks, getting more revenue out of that. So, in that perspective, we're looking at it.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

The conscientiousness, of course, how to be self-disciplined and organized as a person. Because you got to see it like this because if you're an Account Manager of the account development team, you have about 50 to 60 advertisers, that all send you emails, that all send you additional information, things you should do, steps that you should take to make sure that it's all effective. Then, I think you should be self-disciplined, you should be able to answer the questions within 48 hours. You should organize what is important to be done within a short period of time. If you have an advertiser that's going to quit. If you don't do a certain thing, of course, it has more priority than somebody who can wait two days.

I would say, emotional stability a second one. Because you're in conversations with a lot of people, and in general you have different types of people that react in certain types of ways that there's always a possibility that somebody doesn't really match with your energy or the way that you're conversating I actually had that type of conversation just now. Before this interview so it's all about okay you got to stay in the moment you're representing your company you're representing what it could be for the company to make more money, etc so for me it's not just looking at it from an emotional perspective, I'm really looking at Okay, what does it take for me to make sure that I am ok for the advertiser.

I would say then agreeableness because you're in conversations with people, you're trying to convince them of why they should work with the type of vertical that they haven't worked with yet, or if they are in a situation that they know that you're right, but they don't want to admit that you are right because they don't like you. It's kind of a factor that helps with getting things done in general.

We are also looking at the openness of course because, within our sector, it's really important to learn new techniques, new developments within affiliate like within a month, there might be a new publisher in a new type of vertical that we haven't really experienced yet so you should be able to be flexible and work within that segment in general.

And lastly, I would say, the extraversion. This is how outgoing or how social somebody is. you should always have a small chat with a person, as you said balance is also really important you should really feel out how a person is. Some people give you a lot of energy and some people just are more introverted. So in that way, the energy is quite different and the conversation styles quite different

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIRE, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

Tactful, Usually you're talking to different types of personalities and some people, as you would say, do not appreciate to be approached in a very non-professional way and some people actually don't mind that. So, you should know the fine line of how to act on that.

Goal-orientated I would see it from the advertiser's perspective because if you have a good advertiser that makes a lot of money that will lead to the goals that are set within Awin.

Compassionate, That also combined with the tactfulness is, you know, Different types of personalities, really need some more care like okay, how are you doing how are you feeling, a bit of the snugness. Making sure that they feel comfortable to talk to you and in case there's a problem within that company, you get the additional information to take the right steps. For example, if you are friendly over the phone and people feel comfortable talking to you, they might be able to tell you okay we have some financial issues going on so in the back of your mind, you already know Okay, I have to do some steps to prevent this company from going down in the affiliate side.

Ambitious, if you get your accounts rolling, working, effective, and within a certain amount of time they are creating GP, then I feel that you're already showing that you're more ambitious to do more within account management, and in the sense, it will then bleed over within your own work. Of course, if your manager then has a position open you can then have that conversation like okay, I've shown, I've proven that I am a good Account Manager, and I'm ready for the next step.

Action-orientated, There are action points that you get out of an email, so you should really be action-orientated to get things done. I would say it in that way.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Maybe being a little bit more empathetic because I'm really goal orientated and some people actually say quite the robot because I don't mess around when I work. So I should, you know to tone it down a bit and maybe showing more care.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

Yes, I've received feedback from my team leader.

It was in the beginning so in the beginning of switching towards becoming an Account Manager, so that that's something in the long run that I've been trying to improve.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Yes, over time I've been asking my manager and our team leader for additional feedback when I'm sending emails out, or once in a while when I have an important goal they are next to me to provide feedback or suggestions during the call.

Well I would say I've improved but it's something that's not really quick to change it's a procedural thing that that happens over time

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

I would say give yourself the time to actually learn the job in general because it's a lot that you get in terms of information, things you should do, things you should know. You don't know everything yet, you should give yourself time and develop yourself a certain style that you want to achieve that something I would give us advice. I would say it's always a procedure of trying to improve over time is not something that you know, because if you know everything then, of course, you're done with the position.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

A jolly bunch, that could be considered positive within the Dutch market. it's more of a casual person that drinks like a latte and, like, an iPhone in the other hand and is friendly with everybody and is friends with anybody and you would be surprised how many friends he would have.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

Yes, I don't know if the market, in general, is quite jolly. So, there are a lot of people that are like that extroverted energetic type and so they kind of fit in, but maybe for the professionalism, maybe I would say somewhat more of a business feel within the company and that will then shine out externally.

What I would say they do get the right people in the company but something that they could work on is keeping the right people within the company because there was a significant amount of people with a lot of experience leaving the company.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

Well, the hardest job is keeping the customer satisfied because when you are actually doing additional work. They tend to get used to it, instead of seeing it as an additional added benefit so for example if you provide a large list of publishers that might be relevant.

They start to expect it, the only way that you can avoid this is okay based on your feedback or something that you've provided. I've added additional value by providing you a list of publishers that might be relevant to what you're looking for so that's something that's quite difficult as a balance because if you don't do it it's kind of like you're looking you are walking behind the facts and if you are doing it on a regular basis they see it as normal.

WHY WOULDN'T YOU JUST IN A WAY STOP DOING IF IT'S NOT IN THE SALES LEVEL AGREEMENTS? WHY DO YOU KEEP ON DOING THAT?

Well, I see it as an extra bet based on the performance that that delivering because some accounts I already see that they are almost ready to go to that next level so like at the am (higher in Awin) level within Awin, but there are certain factors that are keeping them at the account development level. So like the intensity that they work with affiliate. They don't have a dedicated person, or the dedicated person is leaving within two-three months. So, getting that relationship going again is something that's an element that we always have to work on.

Well, the easiest part, I would say is working within our team for example because we have a good structure, we have a good mix of different personalities, in the case that you have something or a question, somebody else can help you immediately, engage in the feedback or you're looking to improve something or you want to develop certain skills. Everybody's quite appreciative and also very supportive in that element so I would say that would be the thing that makes it most comfortable working within Awin.

WOULD YOU SAY IT WHEN IT'S QUITE INTERDEPENDENT THAT THE SUCCESS OF ONE PERSON IS HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON HOW OTHER PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO HELP AND THE ANSWERS THAT OTHER PEOPLE GIVE?

I would say yes because in certain positions we don't really have a lot of manuals or things that you could use to immediately find okay this is the problem, or if it is it's a hidden within the 50 different documents to read and look okay this is not what I was looking for, etc. So, a lot of things are dependent on, for example, the contact that you have with your manager or your teammates, or somebody else within the company that has the experience so that's also a weakness. So, in general, it's a positive thing because the knowledge is there, but if too many people that have that knowledge leave we have a problem.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

Well, the challenge I would say if there is no challenge in my work I do not find it interesting.

AND YOU BELIEVE THAT AWIN. CURRENT HOUR WHILE YOUR JOB NOT EVEN GIVES YOU THAT EVERY DAY?

Yes. well, I'm relaxed now but I have a lot of things that come out of the blue. If there's, for example, a publisher or advertiser that wants to or quit their program or wants to shut down the thing that makes them the most money so I have a lot of challenge here it's not a problem.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT, BECAUSE THIS IS ACTUALLY QUITE INTERESTING ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBILITY AS AN ACCOUNT MANAGER?

I think that is really important if you are not able to deal with, like, a situation where things are going well, there aren't a lot of problems, an advertiser is complaining and you're not working on making that program even better. After a while, it's going to pop up. Or if you don't have enough communication with your advertiser looking at touchpoints like okay, how are you doing the, do you need some help. Are their things that are missing within a program, you have not received in a gap analysis from me, a while ago so I'm going to provide you on, did you work on the first one that I delivered to you. So it's like trying to keep them engaged.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

So if we're looking at the company it is more because we're in the marketing segment, working with new developments within the segment, in case there's a new publisher, those kinds of things, the technical part.

But also the more dynamic part of marketing that's focused on basically the numbers. If we're looking people, there's a lot of differentiation different personalities people can walk to each other when we're in the office normally without the corona.

Of course, the communication between people, so that there is a dynamic going on, but there are also people that fit your personality better than others. It's also important to be able to deal with different personalities and then that will actually help you develop as a professional over time.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK?
WHY?

I'm going to look at the new one because they are making a lot of revenue right now and they can grow immediately to am, and with the advertiser X. Of course, you're going to give them the meeting for next week, but you're also giving them an explanation like okay hey, I'm already booked and the problem is, I cannot meet immediately so you're going to base it on the relationship that's going on with them. Advertiser Y can grow immediately. They are in the star position as you have like different matrixes so you have like to star you have the cash cows, you have the lager and you have the other one. So, advertiser Y is currently more important, because they make money advertiser X is important, but he's not that important compared to the other one.

You do consider the relationship of 10 years, but because they have a relationship of 10 years it has a stronger bond so you're able to be more flexible with that advertiser you already know them a bit more you and they understand how you're working and they trust that you will provide the right information and also the right solution so the fact that you're also planning it in on a later stage gives you more time to prepare a better plan, which they will appreciate more of course.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

Well, I don't know for certain because I'm thinking of the advertisers within my portfolio that make a lot of money. Of course, we're looking at the ones that make more GP is going to be more important. So, if we're talking about an advertiser that has been here and has been loyal of course we're more flexible with them. If we do see the opportunity within our portfolio to have a star that can immediately grow to the key account level, of course, we're going to give them a priority because they are the growth potential, they will make the money, there is a guarantee there.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Lucas Baart

Date: Thursday the 16th of April 2020

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

I am Lucas Baart an Account Manager at Awin.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

At the moment I think I have been working for one and a half years now Awin I started as an account executive for the first six months. So basically my job was more to help out the key Account Managers with the daily tasks so like validating sales or uploading banners, or communicating with the publishers. It was not a strategic job and more of a supporting job. So after those six months, I started in the account development team.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Right now, since the beginning of April, I moved up to the account management team. So, basically, it means I now have advertisers in my portfolio that will generate more Gp and more revenue for us.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

Yes, I think the three character traits. The most important three are proactive. So what they (advertisers) would like to see, because most of the time and especially in AD (account development). We don't see much proactiveness from the advertiser side, because most of the time they don't have time to manage the affiliate channel because the affiliate channel is too small compared to the other channels. And therefore, it's very important that they have a proactive Account Manager who will contact them with any optimizations for the program. So I think that's one of the most important ones.

Then the other one will be on a social level. I think you just need to know how to communicate with the advertiser, so communication is a very important skill especially when you have such a diverse portfolio with so many different kinds of advertisers but also many different kinds of contact persons. It's really important that you can level with all these types of people because all my contacts are different basically, some are more on a strategic level, some you just need to do a bit more chitchat. So it really depends. So I think that's the second one is more into communication.

And the last one I would say is, solutions-oriented. I think that's the other one because

also what we see with a lot of programs is that there are a lot of troubles and new troubles. So, all the time there's something that needs to be fixed. So that's why the second thing I said is communication, first, you need to reassure that everything will be okay and after that, you need to look for a solution. So I think those are the three most important ones.

Well, I actually have one more, the last one because also what I'm totally forgetting is also you need to have some commercial insights. At the end of the day, the most important thing for our affiliate program is that the program will grow and the advertiser will make more money, which basically means that we will make more money, and the publishers. So, to make that all happen of course you need to have a commercial vision on everything. So those would four most important qualifications, you need to have as an Account Manager in my opinion.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

1. In my opinion, it depends a bit on both kind of person you're dealing with yourself. Because some people want to have contact on a social level and other ones it more just like, get the job done, and focus on what needs to be done. I think the last one extraversion is for me is the most important one because as an Account Manager. It doesn't matter which branch you're working with but the most important thing is that you have a good connection with your advertiser or with your client so that's why I would say extraversion is the most important one.
2. The second would be agreeableness and that also stems from what I've said before because that's also focusing on the relationship you have with your customer.
3. Conscientiousness and that's because in the role and within Awin as an Account Manager you have your own portfolio with all advertisers and you need to do your own job, of course, you have a manager where you can always ask for help, but basically, you're on your own. And you need to make sure that your portfolio advertisers in your portfolio are growing.
4. I would say, emotional stability because of all the different kinds of situations you will experience. So you will also need to deal with a lot of angry advertisers who think they're paying too much for example or are just not satisfied with the results. So that's why I also think you need to be emotionally stable because sometimes it's a lot of work you need to do also you need to manage all those different accounts. So, I would rank that one on the fourth place
5. Last place I would put openness to new experiences.

OKAY SO YOU HAVE AGREEABLENESS AND EXTRAVERSION TOWARDS THE CLIENTS BUT HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK THAT IS INTERNALLY?

I think it's very important because, although I said, you need to do on your own with your advertisers it's also that you can help each other. By having those social skills that will help you a lot. We also need to rely on the tech team, because like you maybe already know, sometimes programs also have some technical errors or issues, and therefore it's also really important that you have a good relationship with the people from the tech team. So, therefore, it's also very useful for those qualifications.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIRE, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

I think the first one should be the last one so verbally skilled because our job exists of connecting to a customer so verbally skilled is, by far the most important one. And it'll also help you with growing within the organization.

And the second one, I would say, ambitious. So it's not only ambitious like I want to grow within Awin but also I want to make this program grow to the next level by generating more revenue for the advertiser so that's always most important result for the advertiser so by generating more revenue you will have happy advertiser, basically.

Goal-oriented which relates to what I said before.

Also because of the social level, I would think that tactful will be the fourth one for me. What I saw is that sometimes you have advertisers who are really emotional and on an emotional level when they call you. So you really need to take it easy with them and therefore I think tactful will be the fourth one.

Action-oriented, also relating to what I said before. You need to grow revenue for the customer so that is an important one.

AND IN RELATION TO THE VERBALLY SKILLED. WHEN YOU SAY THAT, DO YOU MEAN IT MORE IN A PERSUASIVE MANNER FOR THE ADVERTISERS TO PERSUADE THEM THAT THEY ACCEPT WHAT YOU SAY, OR DO YOU THINK THAT IT'S A MORE INFORMATIVE WAY OF GIVING THEM INFORMATION AND JUST LETTING THEM KNOW THINGS ARE GOING IN A GOOD MANNER?

Both are important, definitely, but I think the most important one is to persuade them. And that's also the most challenging one.

what we see with advertisers is on first hand they don't really agree with us most of them is not that easy so you really need to persuade them. So yeah, I would say the persuasion is the most, important one within the verbally skilled.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Well actually, before I went to the AM (account management) team, I needed to do like not really a job interview but I did a case so fictive case for the current manager of the AM team. I also received some feedback and the feedback they gave me was to grow to

the next level I need to also be more persuasive like we discussed minutes ago. For me, that will be the one that I would want to focus on.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)

Definitely. A few a year we also go to advertisers where we discuss the performance and also tell them what our plans are for the upcoming months or for the upcoming year. And in these meetings Niels our team manager is also joining, and after those meeting meetings he's always giving feedback, and that's also feedback based on our skills. So, for example, he's also said to me that sometimes I can be a bit too relaxed and just let the advertiser talk, and sometimes I need to more take control of the conversation. I think, basically, that's the most important one. So, those kinds of feedback we receive most of the time after a meeting but also in our one on ones we have with our team manager.

WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

In my case, it was mostly positive.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

I definitely think I received those opportunities at Awin. So, there are a few things. One of those things is that we have the Awin Academy, where we once a month I think we have a training at another location than our normal office. Those trainings are really focused on how to connect with a customer or persuasion is also one of the topics of the trainings. So those definitely help and also every quarter we make, we set up, OKRs. So you might have heard about the company OKRs on where to focus on as a company, but we also have personal OKRs which are most, most of the time they're in line with the business, or the company OKRs. You also need to make one personal OKR which is really focused on yourself and what you need to do and where you need to focus on yourself.

AND DO YOU KNOW YOUR OKR FOR YOUR NEW TEAM ALREADY OR HAS IT NOT BEEN SET YET.

That one has not been set yet. The last one from the first quarter of this year was. one was more like, I need to, I think on a social level I was already. Okay, so, I also wanted to focus more on the strategic level so I wanted to give more strategic advice to advertisers because that's one of the ways you can grow from AD to AM, to really make a difference in the with a strategic vision, and that you can show them, I can grow a program like this, for example.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

I would say show courage, don't be too afraid because at the beginning I was like, Oh no, and because it's in the business field, I was a bit afraid like maybe they are going to

ask me all kinds of hard questions. So I was a bit insecure in my first course as an Account Manager. But what I learned and what advice I would give to new Account Managers, just go with it and don't be afraid to ask questions, or to start a conversation because they don't expect from you also that you know everything. Yeah, I think that that's my most important lesson. Don't be too afraid, just go for it.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

I think the most important one is the social level. Because we're doing a lot of things together as colleagues, someone arranges tournaments for FIFA for ping pong so it's really all on a social level. I would definitely say it's one of the character traits of Awin, but also ambitious and that's shown in all the takeovers we did as a company like we really want to grow as a company and therefore we buy up other affiliate networks. So that's also one a very important one and that's also why we are the biggest affiliate network of the world.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

I think where they are doing good, especially when we look at how they treat their employees or how they care for their employees, is that they, they are really focusing on the development of their employees so for example with Awin Academy. They offer a program where all employees can focus on themselves and their own development. So that's one thing, they're really good at.

Also, one thing they are good at the moment and which wasn't the case in the past, is that they're really transparent about where they want to grow to as a company, for example, right now they are showing the company OKRs to everyone, to really show them what kind of strategy they want to follow this year.

No, I can't think of anything that they could do better.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

Spending time on all advertisers so sometimes because we have quite a big portfolio of advertisers, sometimes you forget a few and you don't talk to them for a few months. So the hardest thing is to manage your time in such a way that all the advertisers get the right attention. Yeah, because most of the time it's just that the advertiser was the biggest mouth and who contacts you a lot gets the most attention but it's not all the time, the one that needs the most attention. Yeah, I think that's the hardest one to really

I think the social level is the easiest for me

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

It's to keep the client happy that's the most important part. I think all the time that's by growing revenue for the advertiser.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

We do not really have a hierarchy, so for example, when we're working in the office we don't have several rooms one for the staff one for the employees from. Well, it's just one open room and for me, It also shows how Awin is so we don't really have hierarchy it just doesn't matter I can step to Jesse (regional manager) and I can tell him what I think about something if I want to.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK? WHY?

I would plan a meeting with advertiser x first, the other one I would schedule for later because advertiser y is already making a lot of revenue. And advertiser x is also one who has been with the company for quite some time. So that's why we first would contact advertiser x.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

I'm not sure it could be that they think more in revenue so that they would say first contact advertiser y. I wouldn't know which one they would prefer. But most importantly I think they would trust my decision in this.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo
Interviewee: Lars Van Egmond
Date: Friday the 17th of April
Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

Sure. My name is Lars, and I have been working at Awin since January 2018, so let's say two years, and almost four months. I'm a senior key Account Manager at Awin, and I manage the portfolio of the T-Mobile group. So that's mobile and broadband.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Well, basically, the main objective for me is to reach the client's targets and to keep them satisfied and to make sure that Awin has a satisfied customer and earns the most possible money.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

Okay, so entrepreneurial relationship-oriented and always looking for new opportunities.

Entrepreneurial, I always try to look for new publishers to look for new opportunities within the current publisher network to see basically how we can grow, how I can grow the affiliate channel of my clients, basically. And I'm also looking within the company to see how Awin can grow in general.

DOES AWINN HELP YOU SET GOALS OR DO YOU SET GOALS YOURSELF?

Both, we are encouraged to set quarterly goals so that's something that it's initiated through Awin, but I'll also set goals for myself. So, it's both.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

Emotional stability, Well, emotional stability, I think, as an Account Manager you are under a lot of stress, and yes during these moments of stress, those are the moments when you show who you really are in my opinion. You can be, for example, 80% of the time a very good Account Manager, but if you collapse under pressure on 20% of the time for my clients that would be a no go. So I think in general in business emotional stability is very important.

Conscientiousness, Well self-discipline is very important because you have a lot of tasks, you need to keep track of all of those tasks, because that is your job, basically. And if you're not self-disciplined you won't be able to manage that.

I would say extraversion on three. Agreeableness and extraversion are similar in my opinion. So those are close to each other. Let me put it like this emotional stability is a clear one conscientiousness is a clear two and three to five are very close to each other.

Agreeableness

Openness to new experiences, well I personally find it very important. I believe it's very important, but it also depends on your contact person at the advertiser side because some people just want someone who is very structured, you know, who does exactly what they want, and then they are very happy but other kinds of persons, they want someone who is looking into the future trying to see where the opportunities lie. For me personally, I find it very important because if everyone just does their job, and the way it should be we're not going any further. So, in my opinion, it's a very important part, but it's not, per se, one of the basic character traits of an Account Manager, I think.

Extraversion, although I think it is important, I think, looking at the other character traits. This is the least important because it's not a necessity to be extroverted.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

At Awin I would say someone who is social, structured, self-disciplined, and who is innovative and emotionally stable.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIR, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

Goal-oriented, in general in business it's very important to reach your goals so you can be a very social guy and be very pleasing to everyone but if you don't reach your goals well you're not doing your job well.

Social, you are an Account Manager so you are In contact with your contact person daily so you need to have social skills.

Self-assured, self-confidence is a very important element in general. So in your normal life but also in your business life. If you say it with confidence that it's more convincing. You come across better as a sincere business partner.

Verbally skilled, as I mentioned you're constantly in contact with your clients, and you need to make sure that you're able to bring the message across in a good way to make sure they buy it.

Ambitious, I think if you're ambitious you try to challenge the status quo, always. In my opinion, this is a very important element. If you're not ambitious you don't have the internal drive factor to grow.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

My presentation skills and my self-discipline.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

Yes.

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

From my manager, I'm always in contact with him to see how I can improve so this is something I've discussed with him before, but not really from my contact persons.

To be honest, I am self-disciplined but compared to my other traits, this is one, I could improve.

Normally we have a monthly one on one to discuss these elements

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS?

Yes, definitely. Like the positive thing about Awin is that you're in contact with the biggest clients in the world, basically. So, yes, you have a lot of opportunities to grow but I think you also have to look at yourself because in the end, you have to do it yourself so yes you have a lot of opportunities within Awin to grow. You have a lot of training so that's a very positive thing but In the end, you have to be motivated to grow. Awin gives you the handles to grow but you have to grab them yourself.

BESIDES THOSE TRAININGS THAT YOU HAVE IS THERE ANY OTHER VENUE TO LEARN THINGS OR IS IT ONLY BY THOSE TRAININGS?

Well, you learn on the job but besides training and learning on a job not really, no.

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

On the job and training, I would appreciate it if we could have more training based on what you personally would like to improve. But in general, I'm satisfied with the trainings.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

Well, at the beginning, I think, although it seems a bit standard but I really believe in it. Work hard, It's the little things that count in my opinion, so be on time, be professional let me put it like that, be prepared for a meeting, try your best to show you that you want to grow, think outside the box so take initiative.

I think you can really show yourself and really get in the picture if you think outside the box and show the ideas that you have.

Make sure that you follow up on your promises. So if you say something to your clients, always do it, because if you have a reputation of being untrustworthy that's something you can't erase.

The work that you do try to do it as if someone is looking over your shoulder to see how you do it. And lastly, be sincerely friendly, do not be fake.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

I would say a learning school, innovative, fun, modern, everyone is equal, those are the first words that come into mind.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

Although we are innovative, I believe that innovations could be implemented quicker. In my opinion, the workload for Account Managers is pretty high. That results in a situation where there's not a lot of room to begin on side activities. So I think if you just only do your job, you won't grow as a company, and sometimes a feeling that if the workload would be a little bit less, you would have more time to think outside the box for example.

I think it's a very relaxed atmosphere. Everyone's equal which is very important to me. We get a lot of training so that's good.

REGARDING THE HAVING TIME TO DO OTHER THINGS. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT, COULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?

Let me put it like this, for example, you have five working days, if your work can be done in four days, basically, you have one day a week, where an Account Manager gets the opportunity to come up with ideas to grow the company. In my opinion, to be innovative, you need some more spare time and that's what I mean with that.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The easiest part for me is the social contacts. I think that is something that is natural to me so it's not something I have to work on. The most difficult for me is I have so many tasks that it's sometimes difficult to remember them all and to be so structured that you follow up on everything you have to do.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

Basically that you reach your goals and the goals of your client. If you reach the goals of your client, then they're happy

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

Fun, equal and a lot of activities

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK?

The one who is new and making a lot of money.

WHY?

Well, basically, I think, since they have been in the company for a long time you have a good relationship with them so the relationship is more reliable. For a new advertiser who is making a lot of money for you, the relationship is more fragile so you have to please them a little bit more in the beginning.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

To be honest, I am not sure.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Jia Jia Ye

Date: Monday the 20th of April

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

Yes, of course. My name is Jia Jia and I have been working for Awin for almost 4 years now almost four years or actually I started as an intern four years ago it's family Blends which is a partner of Awin. And I think two years ago we started really working together with Family blend and Awin.

Then I transferred to the Awin office. So I was an intern for six months, and I'm working as an Account Manager now for over three years. At the moment I do that in a call management team with different advertisers within Belgium, retail shopping family, and kids.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

So we try to or at least I try to be the partner for my advertisers and advise them in how to do affiliate marketing within their branch so every day, I'm helping my advertisers to grow their business. I do it with different plans so one day I make an exposure plan for different seasonality's. The other day, I'm looking at what the numbers are, and how they're different from the year before and how we can improve the numbers. I keep an eye on a budget from advertisers and also, of course, the smaller things if there are any problems with invoices or publishers, or if something's not clear I help them with this. So as an am Account Manager, I have frequent contact with my advertisers, I think, on average, I have bi-weekly calls with my advertisers. And I think that should be it. So I think was the most important for me as an am Account Manager is to be a partner for my advertisers and really support them with getting the best out of their affiliate program and advise them in depth.

WHEN YOU SAY YOUR PARTNER FOR YOUR ADVERTISER WOULD YOU SAY THAT THEY VIEW YOU AS AN EXTENSION OF THEIR TEAM?

Yeah. I think that is the power of being a good Account Manager also. So, it really differs from the ad team also in the ad team you have a more supporting role. I've been in the ad team also and you really support them with doing the affiliate business In the am team I think the most important thing for me being a am team Account Manager is to make sure that they see me as a value in their team and maybe I'm not working for brands, but I am there to support them and advise them and being there, or being their business partner.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

It's actually a funny question because I've just talked this through with my manager. I think that it is really important and that's also something that I've learned through the

years that is good communication skills. And that sounds really logical but we of course work with a lot of different advertisers, some with a really strong personality others where you have to ask a lot before you know what they really need and really want. So I think it's really important to have strong communication skills. Also to be empathetic to feel it when your advertiser is not agreeing with you or has not a feel of things, and know how to handle that.

I think that also describes me best I think I have pretty strong communication skills. Now, I'm thinking I think that's the most important thing.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

Agreeableness is a really important one, I think I will put that on number one because I think what the difference is between really working in a team for brands and working for a partner such as Awin is that you have to create some kind of extra value for your advertisers. That starts by making sure that you have a good connection with your advertiser. So I think that's why I would put agreeableness on number one.

And on number two, I would put emotional stability because being an Account Manager could be a really hard job in terms of that it could be really busy I do have a lot of opinions. Yeah, I think emotional stability will be number two for me.

And then number three, I'll put openness to new experiences also because I think working with all those different brands can teach you to look at problems or issues in different perspectives and also teaches you that not every problem has the same solution. So, I think as an Account Manager you should be open to new ways of looking at issues and that's why I would put openness new experiences on three.

So, four I think I will put extraversion, and that's because I think when you do, for example, QBRs or HBRs. It's really important to make sure that everybody who's in the same room with you understands what you're saying and goes along with your opinion and what you advise them so I think being outgoing and social in those kinds of situations is really important. So, I would that I will put that on number four

Being self-disciplined and organized. I think it is important for an Account Manager, but I won't put that as high as the other values because I think that's something for yourself. That will help you to do your work better. In the end, of course, it will help you be a better Account Manager, but it's something that's more for the Account Manager himself, I think.

IS IT ONLY IMPORTANT TO BE SOCIAL WITH YOUR CLIENTS OR IS IT ALSO IMPORTANT TO BE SOCIAL WITH YOUR TEAMMATES AND WITH THE AWIN GROUP ITSELF.

If I look at Awin specifically, I think Awin is a really outgoing company. We really strive to have the Awin culture within the Awin company and that also means that being outgoing and a social person. I won't say it is the most important thing because,

of course, it doesn't mean that you can only work at Awin when you're an outgoing social person. But I do think that's the best mesh internally within your company.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

So besides having good communication skills, I think it's really important that you are a fast learning person. Since online marketing is very dynamic, every month and every year, something else happens. And also when I compare it to two years ago, a lot of things have happened. So I think you should be a good Account Manager should be a fast learning person. Next to that, I think you should have a natural way of handling people, not sure if that's the right way to describe it. And I also think it's really important that you know how to say that, how to get people along in your story how in what kind of competence could I describe that best, persuasiveness.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIRE, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

Verbally skilled

Empathetic

Goal-oriented

Humble

Open-mindedness

I've noticed that the skills that I'm selecting are mostly skills that help you to create some kind of not sure how to say that in English but in Dutch I would say gun-factor (like factor).

So I think the skills that I selected will create this life factor. If you're verbally skilled or you're empathetic. If you're humble people like you and also your advertisers are going to like you and that makes I think on long term your relationship more easygoing which will result in the fact that they trust you more and that you can say everything that you need to say to them as a partner. So that's why I would select those five skills. And also, again open-minded because like I said I think it's important in the long term, that you, as an Account Manager, know how to handle different issues in different ways.

ALL OF THEM ARE PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD OR PRETTY EASY TO UNDERSTAND. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU HOW YOU SEE HUMBLE IN THE WORKPLACE. SO WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH THE ADVERTISER CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU COULD BE HUMBLE, BECAUSE IT'S HARD, FOR ME TO SEE HOW YOU COULD DO THAT.

So, I think, humble for me means that you. If something happens that you could say okay, it really sucks that that happens. We'll find a solution or it's okay. You forgot to do this but we can find some solution to this. So that's how I see humble.

IF AWIN HAS SOMETHING THAT A COMPETITOR DOES NOT HAS, HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE OR ADVERTISE IT TO THE CLIENT WILL YOU BE LIKE UP IN THEIR FACE ABOUT IT OR JUST MORE LAID BACK.

In the situation that you explained. I think the moment when you start doing that. So really advertise the fact that we have something that a competitor doesn't have, you will create a more network advertiser relationship, instead of a business partner relationship because I think it's a good thing of course that we have something that the competitor doesn't have but we don't need to put it in front of their face and say hey we are better because in the end they already chose us in above the competitor.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

So I do have something that I really want to improve but I'm not sure which skill that would fit best but maybe you can help me with this. So, I, I can sometimes go along with the advertiser a bit too much so let's say they don't want to work with for example voucher code publishers, I can say really quick. Okay, I understand where you're coming from let's not do it instead of thinking okay but that would cost our network or a win a lot of money so don't do it. Maybe goal or action-oriented.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

I think my biggest. I wouldn't call it an issue but the thing I should work on the most is indeed the fact that I don't always have to agree with the advertiser. I think throughout this conversation, maybe you have noticed but I am thinking a lot about so how can they like me, how do they see me as a part of their team but yes, of course, I still work for Awin and the money that I bring in still for me and so I think I should learn more to separate those two things better. That's also feedback that I've got from my manager Dirk.

And also something that I'm working on and which sometimes still bit hard is that you don't take things personally. So when things go wrong, I tend to think it was my fault. But of course, there are so many factors why things could go wrong or why people make a decisions.

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

So I have a one on one with my manager every month. And every month, we talk about my progression. We have a feedback meeting twice a year. And now we're doing check-ins which happens every quarter.

So I think many receive positive feedback.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS TRAITS?

Yeah, I think it's already a really good thing that I can talk about this with my manager and we both agree that this is something that I have to work on. In our work field, a lot of things can happen where you can train those skills. For example, when an advertiser decides to stop the program. That's a moment that I can start training to think more about okay but what can I do to make sure that we can extend this contract or do things differently, and think in a other perspective so it's not that I get a literary training for this but there are just a lot of moments that it occurs

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

No, because I think we do those kinds of things in training, for example, it's always different because in training, you can make mistakes, of course in your work you can also make mistakes but it's easier to make mistakes when you do a roleplay or be in training or things like that so I think you learn best by doing in job.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

Don't be offended too soon, just do your job and make sure that you build a relationship with your partners, but be hard in the business don't let people walk over you.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

I think Awin always strives to be the best in their business and also shows that to their competitors.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

I think Awin is doing really good in showing the world what they're good at. And also really being good at the things that they say that they're good so not only sell but and not do what they promise. Also, I think everyone's really dynamic which is really important in this online world. They develop new things. Make sure they're always on top within the trends and developments in the branch. I think they're doing that really good. I do think that sometimes they forget it is maybe a bit harsh to say but that they have to remember that all those things only can come from the people within the company. So it's important to value them.

I think it's more a bit that all the things that happen, that Awin is doing really good, and that we are on top compared to the competitors, is because I think it was like this really good workers to do this with them. So it just does not come this easy, it is something that is built by the people within Awin and I think it's really important for any company not only Awin to value the people who built that with you.

PERFECT. AND THIS IS ALSO A QUESTION RELATING WELL, IT'S NOT IN MY GUIDE BUT IT'S RELATED TO SOMETHING I HEARD FROM ANOTHER ACCOUNT MANAGER AS WELL. AND THAT ACCOUNT MANAGER TOLD ME THAT BASICALLY, HE BELIEVED AWIN HAS THE STRENGTH AND DOES A GOOD JOB RECRUITING THE RIGHT PEOPLE. BUT IT HAS A HARDER TIME KEEPING THE, WELL, THEY KEEP THE RIGHT PEOPLE OBVIOUSLY BECAUSE THE COMPANY IS GOING WELL. BUT

SOME PEOPLE WITH A LOT OF EXPERIENCE AND THE GOOD PEOPLE IN THE COMPANY. A LOT ARE LEAVING WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

Yeah, I agree. I think that is also what I meant by saying that sometimes they forget who built this brand with them, that they don't value the people within Awin enough. And that's, I think, a big risk for every company because I think companies tend to believe everyone is replaceable and of course, in the end, everyone is replaceable. But with that comes a lot of costs a lot of energy, and has effect on your company culture so yeah I do think we should keep the people within Awin with the knowledge that they have instead of thinking everyone is replaceable.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

I think the hardest part of my job is to always advise the right things and advice the things that work for your advertisers. And also what fits within their strategy that could be really hard because it does have different strategies and different perspective so you have to always get in a new kind of role when you talk to an advertiser.

The easiest part is that affiliate marketing, in the end, is an easy way to do online marketing. So, understanding the job and work field, is I think the easiest. It's not hard to literally do affiliate marketing.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

Definitely, building the relationships with all your partners and not only the advertisers but also the publishers.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

What I like most about my coworkers is that we have a lot of the same kind of persons in the workforce, so it's really easy to connect with each other, everyone has around the same age, everyone is social, everyone's hard working.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK? WHY?

I think I would go for advertiser Y. If you are already a good advertiser within Awin for a long time, you would understand better if I asked you to reschedule to another day. And when you are a new program, you are not familiar with the work ethics within Awin yet. So making a good first impression is really important. So I think that's why we chose for Y.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

I think Dirk (manager) really trusts me on knowing how to handle best in those kinds of situations. So yeah, I think it will be in line with what he wants. Because in the end,

what we want as a network is to provide service and extra revenue for advertisers and how to do that is in the hands of the Account Manager. And I think looking at this situation that during a meeting with advertiser Y on Friday would be more important and urgent than advertiser X.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Mike Kramer

Date: Tuesday the 21st of April

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

Yeah, no problem. My name is Mike Kramer, I work as an Account Manager for Awin Benelux. I started in 2018 in February, so I'm working here for a little bit more than two years now. Started off as an account executive where you help Account Managers in achieving their goals strategic wise And after that I became an Account Manager which I am almost now for two years. I'm a specialist in the finance and telecom industry so my portfolio and my accounts are mainly focused on telco accounts and finance accounts.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL ?

Yeah, sure. So actually as an Account Manager, you're always seeking for opportunities for your clients and making sure they are served the right way. So I'm in the account management team and we have a certain kind of SLA, service level agreement. Every team has an own service level agreement, we got the key account team the Account Manager team, and account development team. The highest tier key account, then account management and the lowest tier is account development. You get a certain amount of service so that's what we do as an Account Manager. Next to that, we try to seek for opportunities to make sure the publisher mix is good for the client and that the clients and the sales they are getting are worthy.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

Okay. I think it's important to make sure that you're actually matching the expectations of the client so really looking into what do they need so that's one. Two is to make sure that all opportunities are used so like all the verticals they can access that they're also added and implemented the right way in a portfolio. And the third thing is, I think, making sure that trends and developments are also put into the account because we've got industry teams, and we're trying to use industry teams to make sure the client is up to date with all the new trends and developments, and then we can also put this into the program so they can benefit from that. So I think those are three important character traits that a manager needs or actually does for an account.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

The most important one is conscientiousness. So, how self-disciplined and organized person is I think planning and self-discipline is really important because that's the way we get good value for our clients so we seek for all opportunities and actually also use those opportunities for clients, and we get the motor GP, so I think this one is number one.

I think the second one is emotional stability, so a person's ability to remain stable and balanced, sometimes you get some satisfying news but also sometimes you get some sad news that a vertical is excluded or that some sub-products will fall away. So I think it's always important to stay professional and stay away from emotional reactions to the client.

For an Account Manager, it is also very important to be open for new experiences so to seek for new opportunities and how open-minded you are so you have to be open, you have to be open for other ideas also from your team manager or from your fellow Account Managers. So you can actually seek new opportunities.

I think extraversion is more important than agreeableness because it's important to be social because as an Account Manager you're doing a commercial job. So I think it important as well that you are a social person.

There is a model called the disc personality test. There you can check if you are a promoter, an analyzer, a controller, or a supporter. Sometimes it's hard for a let's say for a promoter to work with analyzer because promoters really say what they think and they're really outgoing. While an analyzer is maybe a little bit quiet and first thinks really about what he wants to say.

People think some people are not nice, but that's just the way they are. So sometimes you have to be really conscious if a person is not that nice maybe it is just their interactive style. So I think that one is important but you can also get things done without finding someone nice. That's why I rank it last I guess.

I think you can be a really extraverted by just being really loud or most of the time people are like the description is like they're actually saying something first and then they think instead of the other way around the way around so that's more way I think about it.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

I think it looks a bit like one of the first questions, I think it's important to have self-discipline and to seek opportunities. So self-discipline is one. Two, to be conscious about your portfolio and the GP it is generating so the gross profit so which clients are getting in the money and which clients need some more focus because there is potential. The last one is I think planning as well you need to be a really good planner and you also need to delegate tasks to the account executive team, to interns maybe, to make sure that you do the job that they can do and if they can do a job for you should utilize that because it can save you time and to make sure that everybody learns as well.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIR, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

I think tactful is really important, it is important to acknowledge the things a client is saying so for instance if a client says I don't want to work with discount code websites. You have to be tactful, you have to understand why they don't want it and you should ask questions, and then in that way, you can actually see from that opportunity for the client and for Awin.

I think also it's important to be goal-oriented because affiliate marketing is very performance-based. So it's really easy to actually see how much the return on ad-spend is or what the ROI is. That is why I think an Account Manager in affiliate should be very goal-oriented. They have to manage the goals for the client and they can also make a nice analysis from that because we are purely performance-based.

As an Account Manager, I also think you need to be ambitious because there are a lot of opportunities to grow in an affiliate sector especially within Awin. There's a certain path you can go from intern to key Account Manager and there are like five rows in between. So I think you need to be ambitious to actually reach your goals and this can be done by being a good Account Manager by seeking good opportunities for your clients for instance.

I think you need to be self-assured because if you are self-assured your persuasion skills are better. So if you're self-assured you can actually sell something really easy or more easy.

And I think you need to be authoritative. We are the professionals as Awin, we know what affiliate marketing is and I think that's important to persuade the clients. Sure, if you're an authority you know what to do and they will listen to you. I think those five are the most important.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

I think I'm not sure if it's on the list but I think commercial-minded. So always try to seek for opportunities even though they're not in the network. Maybe you can do an external scout on Google or use tools for that. So actually seek for new opportunities that have not been used yet. That is something I really want to work on because it offers incremental value to the clients.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

A little bit, so twice a year we send out a survey to our clients about the network and about Awin and a little bit about the Account Manager, how fast they react, professionalism, or the opportunities provided so there are a few things but not really in-depth actually.

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS TRAITS?

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Personally, it's quite positive. Of course, you always try to be better but the last results were pretty good and I am actually satisfied with that, but of course, you always try to improve. The signals have been good. And also if you look at the whole NPS because we measure it in NPS score. For the whole Benelux, the numbers have never been this high. The last time we measured it was the highest we've ever achieved as a company. So I think that things are really going well on that aspect.

Sometimes they are (effective) depends on the client if they take the time to fill in the survey because sometimes they just fill in some scores and some of them give real textual feedback. So that of course helps but I think if you need like more in-depth information, you should maybe adjust the survey for because it's not sufficient.

WHO ACTUALLY MAKES THE SURVEYS THAT YOU GUYS SEND OUT?

I'm not really sure actually, I think this is done by our Global departments may be our head office, but I'm not really sure they're actually developing a new one right now. I'm not sure who made it.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

So I think for a beginner Account Manager it's important to understand what affiliate is and to make sure the problems you're working with that they have a good basis. So make sure the creatives like the banners, the text links are up to date, make sure your account your clients give you all the information you need. So if there are any actions from commercials like discounts or anything like that they should share this with you so you can share it with the publisher or they have to share their self.

I think you really need to work on a basis and then after if the base is there you can seek for new opportunities which are not normal. So where you actually really need an Account Manager to find your options so I think that's the most important.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

That they always try to be better and that's also the USP and being the partner of choice. We always try to show the world that we are the best at work, giving the best service. So I think that's like the characteristic of Awin.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

Yeah, so I think there are actually being steps made that are actually really good. We have lost some clients in the past who were not really seeking for only the service in

the higher (SLAs) and therefore paying higher network fees because as a service network, we also request high network fees and there are also a lot of clients and they are finally looking into that now, enterprise clients and also for lower clients. So we always had like some Basics that small clients couldn't join our network because they were too small. So we are now using access accounts, the normal service we always do, and then we also have Enterprise solutions for like really big clients who don't need to service and just want to use our network to track and that's something we are finally doing. So we got like the whole package, we can give service to any clients and also what they request, so for every client, there's something in Awin. That's what I missed the last few years and that would be my advice, but I am glad to see that they're already doing that for within Awin.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

I think one of the easiest task is to actually like set up a program which is beneficial for them so because of our authority and our persuasion skills we managed to get a lot of verticals and publishers in. One of the hardest parts is that it depends on the client if they know a lot of affiliate it's sometimes hard to a vertical or add a new vertical.

I think it's really hard to say, like some things are easy for one client, but for the other clients it can be really hard, so it's a really tough question actually.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

To make sure the program is beneficial for all parties. So, in affiliate, you have three parties, the network, the publisher, and the advertiser. I think the most important thing as an Account Manager is to create a win-win-win situation.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

We are working on a really professional level. we can have a good mixture of fun and hard work, I think that is also the basis for a company that is performing well. I think Awin is doing great on that point. the workforce is really professional and we can also have a lot of fun and be honest to each other

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK? WHY?

I think the advertiser that has been there for 10 years already and is not making any revenue right now. because advertiser Y is already getting the revenue in and we are actually gaining GP. The urgency for a client can be something else for an Account Manager. advertiser Y I will do that later on because the revenue is going well. Like if they say that the commission is going to hard we need to stop things, then Okay, maybe I can have a look, or maybe delegate it. But as it is now I will actually help advertiser X first because we do not want to lose a client. Advertiser Y is a new client

I do not think he will leave immediately. Advertiser Y is doing well, we are getting revenue in, so yeah I think I would give it to advertiser X

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

I think he (manager) will. because I think he agrees that advertiser Y is getting GP so it is a little bit less urgent. if you are already getting a lot of revenue, you probably did a good activation of the program. I always learned that they probably want to talk about the performance, like some reporting or some analysis. when the GP is coming in the analysis can be done a little later because lacking revenue of advertiser x. so we first need revenue of advertiser X and then we can speak about reporting and analysis because then the flow is just working you know. I think he will agree with me.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No actually not. I think you asked me a lot of good questions, sometimes a little bit hard to answer even, but that's really good I think and I think that makes your interview better.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Linda Ottens

Date: Wednesday the 22nd of April

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

My name is Linda. I currently live in Amsterdam. As I mentioned before with my boyfriend and five months old son. What I do personally, I love to do CrossFit, going for a ride on a racing bike or go for a run, and stuff like that, being with friends and family.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

I started working for Awin in July 2018, So almost two years now.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Within Awin I started working as an HR manager for the Amsterdam office. Because we're slightly different from an organizational perspective, we were just doing the business for Amsterdam and now we are more like a global company. So I'm also working in the global HR team now also as an HR manager for Amsterdam, but also like on a project basis, I also worked for other departments. My work is divided into three pillars so HR business partner, talent acquisition, and HR operations. Within the global HR team, these three pillars are arranged in this way. Normally you work like within one pillar, but because I am working individually. Within the office in Amsterdam, I'm taking care of all of the three pillars.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT YOU LOOK FOR IN THE HIRING PROCESS OF AN ACCOUNT MANAGER.

Well, it depends a bit on the level we are looking for. With a starter, we are looking for different qualities than with a senior. I think as Awin, in general, we always have a number of core qualities that we are looking for. It's also for starters but also for a more senior person so it's not really dependent on the level you're in. You have to be a self-starter, It's very important. As you see now within the circumstances (COVID-19) and you have to start now within Awin, it's very important that you can handle that.

You have to be a team player as well. We have the so-called work hard, play hard mentality. We have a really informal culture within the company. So it's good that you feel free to adapt that.

The most important thing and that's the difficulty with hiring people is that they match within the team. So, that's not really depending on character traits or those kinds of topics. But really looking at what the team is looking for at that moment so that makes it a bit harder as well.

DO ACCOUNT MANAGERS GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSONALITY OR CHARACTER TRAIT TRAITS THAT ARE EXPECTED FROM THEM AFTER THEY ARE HIRED?

Yes, they are mentioned in the vacancy, and in the first meeting we have with them it's more about, get to know each other. So it's really an informal conversation and In that conversation, it will be asked.

DO ACCOUNT MANAGERS HAVE TO TAKE A TEST BEFORE BEING TAKEN INTO EMPLOYMENT?

How we used to have that, the test was called disc. I don't know if you are familiar with it. You can divide people into so-called communication styles. When we took that assessment, they would have one or two of those communication styles. So the hiring manager could see, this is a fit for this particular position or not. It was not good or wrong but it is more to have like an overview on, who is this person in depth. We are looking for another way to do this as disc wasn't that favorable for us anymore.

WHAT WERE DE BENEFITS OF THE DISC TEST?

Well, you could really have a better understanding of who this person would be as a fit in the team. So, for example, are you looking for someone who was more an analytical person instead of someone that was more outgoing or extraverted

ARE THEIR CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS THAT USUALLY END IN THE NON-EMPLOYMENT OF A POTENTIAL ACCOUNT MANAGER?

It's hard to pinpoint it. You also have to consider the match. I'm not sure how you can make that clear but it is more of a feeling of this is not going to work out on the long term.

WHEN EVALUATING ACCOUNT MANAGERS WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

Agreeableness, how warm friendly, and tactful a person is. I rank that at one because as I mentioned before in my opinion that says something about the person's ability to fit into the team or not. I think this is really important.

Number two for me is openness to new experiences. So how open-minded and authority challenging a person is. The work as an Account Manager is very dynamic. So if you think you have it under control, something will change. It's always like that. So I think it's really important that you can adapt to that because it's really dynamic anyway so if you can't do this I think it can sweep you off your feet so to say.

As third one, emotional stability, the ability to remain stable and balance. Well, I have mentioned before I guess the work demands a lot from you so customers and colleagues expecting things. That's why it's important that you can keep your head cool, and that you don't pull these in personally.

For me, the fourth would be conscientiousness, how self-disciplined and organized a person is. Well, as I said before, I think self-starting abilities an important one within

Awin. In the beginning, new colleagues helping in their way but the aim is that you pick up the work yourself and that you explore and suggest new possibilities.

Extraversion, how outgoing is and social a person is. I mean it is important, but I think not that important to put it on like a third-place or so. Because we have both extraverted and non-extraverted colleagues who deliver a similar work in terms of results. So I don't think it's that much of an impact on the performances of an Account Manager. I think on a professional level, every Account Manager can do so because they know it's important. But if it's not who you are as a person it's not that you are less of a performer.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

In general, you could say that it's someone who's able to listen carefully to colleagues and customers, someone who can identify the question behind the question, someone who is proactive, a self-starter, motivated to explore, implement new possibilities, and of course a team player

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIR, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

I think tactful is really important. I think it has a lot to do with what I mentioned before, the ability to identify the question behind the question and mentioning things at the right moment.

Open-minded, I think the business we are in is changing all the time and if you're not open-minded to that, I guess your career will end very quickly. Also for new ideas of colleagues of yours, your manager, and the global organization you're in.

You have to be sensitive. I guess to colleagues, but also of course to clients. In a way that you can understand what they are seeking for, that you're able to feel what they are looking for without them telling you, knowing when you have to open your mouth, or when you have to be silent. Thoughtful is a bit of the same I guess.

Goal-oriented is also very important. It always starts with a goal and we are working a lot with the OKRs, it's really goal-oriented so I think that's very important.

IS THERE ANY FEEDBACK GIVEN ON THE PROFESSIONAL TRAITS DURING THEIR EMPLOYMENT?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?) GIVES IT. WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY?

Not really from my on, I let the team leaders know what I think of the Account Managers, but we do have like a system called kazoo. I'm not going to explain it fully, but every employee has an OKR meeting with his or her manager four times a year. In this meeting, they will receive feedback from the manager. So I think in that way we provide them feedback on the on the above mentioned characteristic traits.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS ANY BENEFIT IN HR GIVING THIS KIND OF FEEDBACK?

I'm not sure because I don't see them work. So, I don't think so. I am involved if there are doubts about someone, that way I can give my opinion or I can coach the manager in what to do, but it's not so much about the performance.

ARE THERE ANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCOUNT MANAGERS TO IMPROVE THEIR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS TRAITS? IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM? DO YOU BELIEVE THIS TO BE EFFECTIVE?

Definitely, we have the so-called Awin Academy in which we work on the soft skills of employees by means of various training courses, and they are based on the level of performance. In these trainings, we mainly work on communication skills and competencies. We have an E-learning platform but that is more about the business.

The improvement can mostly be made concerning what is in there. You have to make changes to the program, what you can use in 2019 is maybe all already old in 2021. So in that sense, I think you have to change the content.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR CAREER AT AWIN?

I think that they have to be curious, not be afraid to ask a lot of questions, not be afraid to make mistakes, and really take the time to learn everything. I think it's not doable to learn this business in one or two months or so, It takes up to half a year or maybe longer to really get familiar with it so take that time.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

Well, for me it would be a woman with a resolute character who knows what she wants. I think I find Awin feminine because she takes very good care of her employees. You see it now with the whole Corona crisis and what they are offering for employees so you can take care of your children, for example, or maybe your elderly parents. Employees are very important within Awin and a lot of attention is paid to them with the Academy for example. So Awin as a person would be caring, nurturing, she would have a winner's mentality and she would be a team player.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

I think it's great that we have the Awin Academy. The downside of it, I would say that the employees have to attend the training session at the times they are scheduled for the year. So it could be that you have missed a couple of trainings, and you can only redo them the next year or so. It might take a while before you have done all trainings. So I think in that sense it would be really great if we could work towards a more personalized situation. I'm not sure if this is doable or not

In addition to that, we are working on a traineeship, so I think this is a nice new element for the starters.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF AN ACCOUNT MANAGER'S JOB?

I think it's very difficult to keep up with all the work, all the different projects, clients, your team is asking something from you, your OKRs. You're switching between all those different tasks, I think this is very difficult. In that sense and Account Manager must be able to prioritize very well

The easiest part, no I'm not sure what they see as easy.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR JOB?

I think, ensuring that our customers remain satisfied and besides that all systems continue to work. Technically speaking, because if the tracking is out the advertiser, publisher and Awin as well will miss their incomes. So I guess that would be the main focus.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ACCOUNT MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES LIKE THE MOST ABOUT AWIN'S WORK FLOOR AND FORCE?

From what I hear it is the mutual atmosphere. I think hard work and a lot of fun, but also Awin's trust in employees, and by that, I mean the flexibility for example, or the possibility to work from home, also the Awin Academy and the possibility to work abroad.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO SHOULD AN ACCOUNT MANAGER MEET AND WHO SHOULD AN ACCOUNT MANAGER RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK IN YOUR OPINION? WHY?

Well maybe the manager disagrees with me, I will go for a meeting with clients Y. Because a relationship here isn't solid yet and with client X it is. I don't think it's a super high priority to meet client X right now if the results haven't come back for that period. I think a week or so doesn't make that much of a difference. So I would reschedule this appointment and focus on the relationship

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No, not really. I think you had like nice questions in there.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo
Interviewee: Julia Rahimi Rigi
Date: Wednesday the 22nd of April
Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

Yes, so I'm Julia I'm 29 and I just started at Awin six months ago. I'm an Account Manager in the account management team and I mainly have a retail fashion portfolio.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

6 months.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

As you know we have three service levels at Awin, we have the account development team, account management team, and the key account management team. I am in the middle service level group so account management, I have a portfolio existing of 11 advertisers and my job is to make sure they have the exposure they want, the program is working the way they like it, that they have a lot of great publishers in the program, and it's my job to have a lot of contact with both to make sure that I get the best deals, to make sure that my advertisers have the best exposure and of course for Awin to have the best commission.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

I would say, I really try to build up a relationship, like I really try to learn what's important for my advertisers like what are the pain points, what is what they would really like and you know every advertiser is different, every company is different, but also every person. So I have a contact person that is really interested in a lot of different publishers or you can have an advertiser that is really reluctant and doesn't like to work with something or someone that he or she does not know. So it's really important to give the right information, so it's really important for me to also understand everything and make sure that I know what I'm talking about. So for me, it's also really important, especially because I just began, but I think over the course of your whole career it's really important to keep on learning, to keep on educating yourself and to see what else is there that you need to know because you always have to be sure that you know, for your customer. Of course, if they ask me something which I don't have an answer to, I can always come back to it, I can always say I have no idea I'll have to check it out, which is not a problem at all. I think it's important that they trust you and then you just build up a relationship and then build from thereon.

HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE YOURSELF WITHIN THE TEAM

I think I can be super serious and very formal sometimes with customers or in certain situations, but I think in the team I'm somebody that's super social, I like to have jokes and talk to people and just have a nice time working together, but like when we're

having more serious stuff I'm more a little bit more in the background I'm not somebody that's always talking, but I like to just hear people out and then make a decision and then say what I want to say.

like you have these four communication styles, I don't know if you're familiar with them. I am down, left (functional). I am somebody that needs a lot of information and facts and I want it straight like I don't want a whole story about something small, just tell me that and then I can make up my mind. I need correct and direct communication and then I can start thinking, but you also have people that just talk, say whatever they want, and then, in the end, you have no idea what their point was. When we're talking about serious stuff or when something needs to get done, I just need to know the facts and then I want to do something and I do not want to think or talk for hours about something. Just, what's the problem, what are the options, how can we fix it, let's just do that and go for it and then just evaluate, see what the problem is or see if there's any problem, and then come with a new plan. That's how I like to work.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

The first one would be emotional stability, from within you have to be all good, balanced, zen, to be able to do the rest. So if the inside is not working the outside won't work either. So I think emotional stability to start with.

I think it's really important to be super self-disciplined and organized because you get a lot of emails, you have a lot of different publishers, a lot of people asking different things. So you need to keep your facts straight.

The third one, agreeableness, how warm, friendly, and tactful a person is. When building up a relationship with the publishers, but also with the advertisers, you're building a relationship with your colleagues and your peers, you also need stuff from them. So it's really important to have a personal relationship and not just business.

I would say then the openness to new experiences, how open-minded and authority challenging a person is.

Then the extraversion, how outgoing and social person is. I think if you're really outgoing, it can help in some situations, but you have to keep in mind that sometimes you have another person across you, that is not that outgoing and when you're really outgoing, it's not going to match. So either way, you would have to adjust the way you communicate to the person that is across you. So it could really help to be super outgoing and be a super social person it's handy to make relationships, but I think the least important from these five.

WHAT ARE THE TESTS WHERE YOU HAVE TO BE OPEN-MINDED?

Let's see, I think, open-minded with discussions within the team. Every two weeks, we have this meeting for scrum, the sprint change. During this meeting we always discuss what we need to do as a team, not always, are we on the same side on this, some people agree that we have to go this way because that is the best way or the other person thinks we have been trying that for so long or we haven't tried it. I think in those situations when you're discussing stuff, you have to be open because people tend to do what they feel good with, like if something you're used to doing you always like to do it that way. I think in those situations you have to be able to do something new and be flexible and think out of the box and also with new publishers or new contact persons. I think those are situations where you have to be open and be flexible with changes and not just want to stick to the old way.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

I see a lot of different ways of doing it, within my team we have a lot of different personalities. A really clear example is Jia Jia (a colleague of Julia) she is super outgoing and really high in her energy levels, and she's really present. Then you have Justin (a colleague of Julia) who is really low (toned), super calm, and really does it his own way and it's not like just talking all the time. But both are working, for him, that's working because that's who he is and for her, that's working. So it's different, but I think it's important for everybody to have their own way of working and I see that. When you develop a way that works for you it is an amazing success so I think the most important thing is the motivation and wanting to be better or wanting to be just the best you can be. Even wanting to be better than your colleagues I think that the competition between people, like healthy competition, will always get the best out of them and will always make sure that they want to keep learning from each other, from managers, from whatever, even if you're reading books. Just wanting to be better that's a trait that a lot of people have at Awin.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIR, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

Let's see, I think a goal-oriented is really important. In the end, Awin has a goal, the publishers have a goal, advertisers have a goal, everybody has their objectives, you have to be able to work towards that. So, first of all, I mean for everybody money is the most important thing. So I think goal orientated. I think in the end if you're not able to build up any sort of relationship with your advertiser or with your publisher, but you have a great way of working and the program is really going well, then nobody's going to complain because they are hitting all the targets.

Verbally-skilled, that's really important, choosing your words wisely and knowing when to say what will also really help in this business.

Tactful is a good one I think. Sometimes you have difficult conversations with a customer, or you don't agree, or you would rather see things differently, or maybe

even know better because sometimes you feel like you know it better than your advertiser, but of course, it's not something you can tell them. I mean you want to have a good relationship so you have to be tactful about how you are going to bring something, how are you going to tell them something, how are you going to make them understand and see that this is actually a better step for their business as well and not just for ours.

I think ambitious is really important because if you're not ambitious, it's just, I don't think you're in the right business because this is a digital business and it is just so important to keep on developing, keep getting better, to follow a training if you think that you could work on your knowledge a little bit more.

The last one would be empathetic.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Yes, definitely! As I said, I just started at Awin a few months ago before I was also an Account Manager, but not in a digital world. So it is different, also I am not so super tech-savvy myself. So there are a lot of things that I still have to learn, but those are technical stuff, really specific stuff that I would like to learn.

I think, verbally skilled is something that I would really want to work on for myself. I think that comes with knowledge, when it's here (points to head) it will also come out here (points to mouth), but when it's not in your head, it's really hard to bring over the things you would like to bring over.

And that's the funny thing, but maybe that's always how things go the things you don't like about yourself or the things you feel that you have to work are things that people don't see at all. Then maybe they see other things, but I think it's something that I see with other people and I'm kind of jealous like “wow like the way you just spoke and the way you told the story was amazing”. You can say it in a lot of different ways but the way you did it I really liked it and I'm not sure if I would have done it the same way, but that's definitely something I would like to learn.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

So we do a two-yearly NPS research, I've never done it before, but this is a sort of survey for our customers to fill in how they rate the partnership, their Account Manager if they're happy with the contact if they're happy with how things are going. So that's coming up and I have not had that one before. Of course, I've had feedback from my manager, I've had feedback sometimes from colleagues, in meeting or something, you do something and then you ask for feedback. So, yes we have, but for me and that's something I've also told my manager is that I feel like sometimes, there should be more feedback because without feedback we were so blind to who we are

sometimes and what we do or how people perceive us. So, getting more feedback, of course, in a normal way, in a way that you're able to digest it and able to do something with it would be super nice.

So definitely once a month, when we have our talks and then we discuss our OKRs or objectives and key results that we always have to enter and formulate for the whole quarter. So then we always discuss like so how do you think things are going, how's the portfolio performance, how are your OKRs, what's going right, what's not going so good, what do you think is the problem. So definitely once a month, but sometimes like in special situations like after a meeting or after a big call or when you have some issues, like the other day I had some trouble with payments with a customer and I had to involve my manager as well to make sure that we were putting in the right steps and then I also got some feedback. So in moments that something has happened, not just a regular working day, but like a special situation we also receive feedback about stuff.

Mostly positive I must say, It's like this, this, this, was good, I like this I like that, maybe for next time If you want to make it even better you can try this, or you can try that. So I feel like there's a really positive vibe at Awin, and it's always really highlighting the things that are already going really well or that somebody achieved, which I kind of like because that really motivates people. But there is also, the space to have some negative feedback to tell what can be better. At Awin there's even a way to have feedback on your manager and on the board and stuff. So there's a lot of space for people to give feedback, and to receive feedback.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS TRAITS?

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Yes, I think so. I think you have to put in the work yourself like my manager would probably tell me if you want to work on that, you should think of this or think of that. He's always prepared to think with me or to help me out if I'm having difficulties, but he would want me to take the first step. Like for example, imagine if I want to work on my presentation skills. He was like you have to come to me and be like that and that day, we have this meeting, let me do a presentation. He's not going to come to me and say, so we're going to sit together and then I want you to do a presentation because in the end, it's something that I want to work on. So he's going to help out and make sure that I have the tools that I need and if there's anything he can do for me he would definitely do it. But in the end, it's up to me to be proactive and to take the initiative and to just do it, and then ask people for help if I need it.

DO YOU EXPECT MORE PRESSURE FROM YOU MANAGER

No, I think there should be a certain level of pressure and I think there is in the sense that we have the OKRs, and you are evaluated. After the quarter then you check your OKR, you also have this check-in that you have to evaluate on a lot of things like you evaluate on your performance and the team, your manager, your OKRs. So you know that's coming and also you see your manager, well you see him every day, but you sit

together once a month to discuss the whole performance of you, your portfolio and whatever. So those are like small pressure moments that you know that are coming and then you have to be able to have a good story like you cannot be sitting there and be like yeah I don't know. I think it's good to have some freedom in this because we are all grownups and I think if you really need somebody to smack you with a stick and force you to do something, then you're probably not in the right place for yourself and you should rethink what you're really doing or what you really want. But for me to speak just for myself, it really helps when I know that there's somebody helping me and giving me some tips, which Dirk does really well because he also has a lot of experience so he knows how to like put me in the right direction, but then gives me the responsibility to go for it and make it happen. That makes me feel adult you know, that also gives me a level of maturity and makes me not feel like a kid, and I don't think I would appreciate it if he would be in my neck all day and asking me so how did you do that and are you working on that and I see you're doing this and that's not matching. So I think the way it's going now works for me.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

I think as a new person in Awin I would definitely recommend that person to, first of all, start within Awin itself and make sure to talk to your colleagues, ask how their career path has been, how do they do it or what are the pain points because I think you learn a lot from people that are kind of the same as you are. You know how you almost all have kind of the same way of doing things. So I think you can learn a lot and then after gathering all this information you can think about what you want to do with it like how are you going to make it your own, how are you going to make sure that you change it to something that works for you. I think it's important to not be shy and just go for it like be open, ask questions and be honest about what you're not good at, be honest about what you want to learn, and definitely acknowledge the things that you're really good at because we all have things that we are super good at but we tend to not look at those things, but I think it is really important because then you know your strengths you also know how to make them work for you. When you don't know your strengths you only see the things that you're not so good at and then things can become a little bit dark. So that will be my advice.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

If it was a person I would say it's a very open, ambitious, hardworking person that is really open-minded giving people chances, not just screaming people on how many years of experience they have but really has this idea that you can learn people everything where there's a will there's a way and I think that really works for Awin. I would say they're really fun, they think it's really important to have fun to enjoy yourselves, it feels like we're all kids sometimes when we are in the office like it's a zoo and the parents left and the kids are just going crazy. think, in a few words just open, hardworking, very ambitious, fun.

IN WHAT WAY DOES A WIN SHOW ITS AMBITIOUSNESS?

I think by always trying to be up to date, by always trying to develop the next best thing. We have a lot of people always keeping an eye on all the trends and all the technology updates, and they don't just talk, they also do it so they switch everything

they've read and they've talked about and they're like okay so now we're going to do. So is there something Mozilla Firefox or Safari or whatever is coming up with, what are we going to do and then they do it and it's a big company, but they still managed to, and of course, there are always things that do not go perfectly, but they do manage to switch, all regions, all territories and make sure that everybody's up to speed and not just HQ you know not just Europe but also places like Brazil and Australia.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY

DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

Yes, I think there are still a lot of points to improve. First of all, I definitely would love that Awin be a little bit more conscious about things. Like with the environment, earth, recycling. Not something that has to do with our business but I think we're a company in this world and if we want this world to keep on existing we have to keep thinking about the environment as well. It's also something that I'm trying to work on within the company. So I really hope that they will work on making this happen like making the offices more healthy and more green and more conscious, but also the way we work, and like all the food that we have I mean it's great that we have this lunch but like a lot of food gets wasted. I think stuff like that could even help with the budgets for the groceries. So, I think definitely that would be really nice.

If you're thinking, what can Awin do for their employers or maybe advertisers. I think that's a tricky one because I think for advertisers and publishers we really do our best. I think sometimes the workload is a bit high for certain teams. I think that's really important to think about because you don't want your employees to have a burnout or something and of course, in this age, everybody's trying to do their job, work out, have social time, have me time, family time, friends time. So, people want to do everything and I think it's really easy to have this burnout so it would be nice if they keep that in mind, and make sure the pressure is not too high for people.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

I think the easiest part is my colleagues. I think they're the best and we help each other, like all the teams in Awin. Everybody is super open, everybody is willing to help like even at home. If I have a question I can just call or Skype whoever or email and I will always get an answer everybody is super willing to help and I think that really makes my work easier, and also a lot of fun, because it's not just work but when we're at the office, you can just also have so much, just casual talks, which also makes things so much more fun.

The hardest thing, for me the tech part because I'm not really, as I said, super tech-savvy and I think sometimes you have things that I don't really understand or tech publishers that I don't really understand, but then you have to sell those to your advertiser so as I said it's really important that you know all the facts and you can answer all the questions. So sometimes I'm struggling with making sure that I have all the information and sometimes I think I have all the information and I have a talk with advertisers and I'm like, Oh yeah, actually I don't know that either. But then when you don't know something you don't know how to ask the right questions. So I think sometimes that makes it difficult but I just tried to have a lot of training have a lot of talks, read all the presentations that the publisher team has made and just to make sure I keep on educating myself.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

I think the most important job is to keep the advertisers happy, to make sure that they're happy with the way we work, happy with the publishers, happy with Awin, and that they see the added value of Awin. As you know, Awin is not a super cheap partner so when they don't see the value of what we do, they will easily go to Daisycon or Tradetracker and that's something that we don't want so I think that's really important and has a lot of aspects into doing that.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK? WHY?

As I said, I think a relationship is very important, partnership is very important, of course, I would, in any case, try to do both on that Friday and see if they can do different time schedules, but I think if it is only one of the two I would definitely go with advertiser X. if the revenue stream has not been going so well, I would probably be afraid that he wants to quit or stop the program and that is something you definitely do not want. If that advertiser has stress or panic, I would like to calm him down. so I think I would go for advertiser X. Advertiser Y, I see things are going well so probably his urgent meeting is a new way of making money and that can probably wait.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

Yes, I think Dirk allows us to have our own opinions as long as we can motivate it. If would say, advertiser X asked me first so I just went for that, or I was not really up to have a talk with him because he is such a difficult customer and he is not bringing any money in so I do not really care, he is not important. I do not think he would agree with that motivation, but I think if I would tell him why he would fully understand and have me make my own decisions about this because at the end of the day it is my portfolio and my responsibility.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

NO, JUST THAT I REALLY LIKED IT. YOU HAVE REALLY GOOD QUESTIONS, IT IS ALWAYS NICE TO THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS AND I WILL PROBABLY HAVE SOMETHING FOR MYSELF IN THIS FOR OKRS AND STUFF SO IT IS REALLY GOOD TO THINK ABOUT THIS.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo
Interviewee: Justin Van Hilten
Date: Wednesday the 22nd of April
Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

My name is Justin Van Hilten. I am working for Awin in the Amsterdam department as a global Account Manager. My specialty is eCommerce within retail and fashion and I manage about 20 different clients.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

Almost two years now.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

I think my job is to consult the clients, actually, the main goal is to keep the client satisfied and work together towards accomplishing their goals, their KPIs. So this could be performance-wise, or they would actually increase their performance within different regions. So my job is to give them strategic advice.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

Analytical, strategic, and compassionate.

Well within these markets, within this field we work two ways. We look at the past and from activities from the past we decide how we want to move forward. So, to have a critical eye to the past it's important to analyze different activities to get learnings on making better decisions for the future. So I think it's important to analyze on different levels to make better decisions for the future.

I can give you an example. So when the client wants to work with an amount of new partners, publishers then they usually set up a trial for two or three months just to see how the collaboration goes. Then, after the trial, we analyze different aspects like how much traffic that it generates, what was the conversion rate, how much revenue did they drive, how big was their contribution to the total performance. We use those insights to decide how we're going to reward them, that can be, are we going to give them bonus payments, how are we going to motivate them. So, yeah, I think it's good that. The analytical competence is a huge part within the job.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

Conscientiousness

Emotional stability

Agreeableness

Openness to new experiences

Extraversion

From my perspective conscientiousness is the basis because it determines your daily structure on how you're doing the job. You have to be organized because without a good structure it is going to be a tough job and this requires self-discipline. This will determine how easy the job is going to be for you.

Emotional stability, It can be quite stressful because the workload is not evenly spread. Some weeks, you will have a massive workload and some weeks it will be easier and when you're in a really busy time schedule and 20 clients are demanding you to do things. You fall back to the conscientiousness, you need to be structured, organized, set priorities, and also communicate about this, but if you don't have the emotional stability, it could be really stressful. So I think that's the second point.

We're working together with people. So, agreeableness, how warm, friendly, and tactful a person is really important as well. So I think that that comes in third because you want them to consider you as a business partner, but also as somebody that is trustworthy, that is really a consultant, that is trying to help you and show you some new insights. I think the way to do that is by being warm friendly, yourself, and tactful.

Number four openness to new experiences. I think that's also important, but less than the others. It also depends on clients, what works and what doesn't work but in general, I think it's really good to be open-minded. Think of new ideas look at it from a different perspective, those are all traits that are important as well.

The extraversion, how outgoing and sociable person is. It's important, but it's not the basis, I would rate it a bit less.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

Well, they have a good structure of working, they have the ability to learn new things easily, they can persuade, share ideas in an enthusiastic and persuasive way, they have the ability of objection handling.

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Goal-oriented, as an Account Manager the best way to track performance is to set goals with the clients, this could also be personal goals. It's important to measure improvements so that's why I think it's important to work with personal KPIs, KPIs for the client, and KPIs for the organization.

Tactful, I think that goes together with your communication skills. When you're tactful

you're always one step ahead, thinking about the situation and how to handle it in a considerate way. So I think tactfulness is important an important trait, not only towards the client but also towards colleagues and the organization.

Open-minded, It's a fast world, a lot of new opportunities come your way, you can go left, right or straight. So it is always good to look at all options and to think out of the box because you there are always different approaches to look at opportunities.

Social is important as well because it's important to have a connection. So, it's okay to be yourself, show your personality and that will improve the relationships that you have as an Account Manager.

Active, as an Account Manager, there is always something to do. When you're passive and you just let it come, that's not the right attitude to have as an Account Manager.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Yes, open-mindedness, I'm facing some challenges, where I'm kind of stuck in how we are going to move forward. So I think the only way to approach these struggles is to have an open-minded view on things and discuss this with other stakeholders.

And action-oriented because when looking at the coming weeks and months, I really need to focus on actions that need to be done within a specific timeframe. So, would be good to improve that.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

Yes, I do, from the team leader, teammates, or from the client.

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

I receive feedback each month. it is mostly positive, but some elements of feedback for improvement as well.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS TRAITS?

Yes, definitely, Awin has a creative work where they spend a lot put of effort into the work atmosphere, but also personal development. The team managers really look into your personal goals, your ambition, and they help you achieve what you want. They guide you and they offer training and learnings that you need to achieve the goal. I think this is really well organized within, within the company.

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Yes, I think this is effective enough. I am actually quite surprised in what level of training we offer.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

In the beginning, ask anything, ask 10 questions per hour on procedures, structure. Then, when you are starting to work ask how other Account Managers structure their workload, how they use their agenda, and especially listen to how they communicate, not only on the phone but also look at how they send communication by email.

When starting to work with clients make sure that you do what you say. Always ask why because you are going to get a lot of requests, can you do this can you do that, and some are unreasonable and asking why will make the client think: "okay why are we going to do this, what goal do we have", but it will also give the Account Manager a better understanding of why something needs to be done and then this can open the discussion about how things can be done better.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

Awin has an ambitious mindset, they are very thoughtful and compassionate. I would say they're also an active organization and also supporting, supporting in self-development, but also on an emotional level.

So actually, a lot of positive points. If I think of elements for improvement. I think it would be becoming a little bit more flexible. I think I think they're progressing because they listen to the employees, but I think what they hear needs to be set in action more.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The easiest part is being social with colleagues, but also with the clients. We always open up a telephone call or meeting with a quick social talk. I think it's easy because we're all humans and it's a big part of being an Account Manager just to be a person. So that's, that's a really easy part.

I think the hard part is dealing with clients that are unsatisfied.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

Being goal-oriented, moving forward. You always have to keep the goals in your mind.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK? WHY?

Yes, I would have the meeting on Friday with x because they've been with Awin for 10 years and they're going through a tough period. I think it's the same as if you reflect it to your social life, if you have a friend for 10 years whose girlfriend broke up with him, and he's not feeling okay then you spend time with him first. The new girl that you met, and you're in love with you can see her next week as well. I think it's important that when there's problem, or there's an issue that's more important than optimizing the good stuff.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?.

Yes, definitely

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

I think these are really good questions. It's good for Account Managers to reflect on these topics and I think it would be interesting for us as team AM to discuss some of these topics with together because I'm curious. Everybody has a different picture of what a good Account Manager looks like. I think it would be good if we would know from each other why we think an Account Manager should have certain skills more than other skills.

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo

Interviewee: Puck Smaal

Date: Thursday the 23rd of April

Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

Yes, of course. I'm Puck Account Manager for Awin the last one and a half years. Active in the key account management team. Previously I had jobs in the marketing industry at online agencies. Well, that about me In short, so yes one and a half year now for Awin as a key Account Manager and also as a product owner for Belgium.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

One and a half years.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Well, on a daily basis I'm busy analyzing data of the advertiser programs, managing all the publisher relationships regarding the program of the advertisers, looking for opportunities for the advertiser, having contact with them, telling them how the program is going, what opportunities there are in the market, etc.

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

Well, I think customer focus, I think is the most important one. If you don't have enough customer focus then you shouldn't be an Account Manager. I think you need to be strong in your communication, so you need to know what you want to tell or advise the advertiser and feel if the advertiser feels the same or not, etc.

I think the commercial attitude is also important. You need to be focused on the advertiser goals and these goals are always performance-based because we are a performance-based channel. So this is the whole commercial part of it. This should be top of mind, you have to look throughout the day, all the time, this is my advertiser goal, will we achieve this goal today, tomorrow, yes or no. If we don't, which channels or which publishers or whatsoever can we, ask to do some sales for us or some promotions. I think that's part of the commercial attitude.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

Well, I have been prepping this interview a little bit so I have them in front of me in your document, and I already rated them. So I think the most important one is the openness to new experiences to have an open mindset. I think this is a really important one because if you're not open to any suggestions from the client-side or the publisher's side, you won't make the program increase. Because you're stuck in the

daily work, so this is where you can make the difference as an Account Manager.

The second one is, conscientiousness, self-discipline and organized work is really important also for the history and the archives that you build up for your client. So did I already propose this publisher or did I already propose this promotional item or whatsoever so I think this is the basis of the account management skill.

The third one is extraversion I think it's good to be a little bit outgoing because you're the one who gives advice to the advertiser. If you're not outgoing then you're always reactive on the advertiser's question, but you need to do this also sometimes the other way around. So take the initiative, etc.

Friendly and tactful (agreeableness) this is the fourth one. This is also important, you need to be a person that the advertiser trusts, and this comes with friendliness and tactfulness. If you receive one question from the advertiser and this is not realistic for example, you do not need to say "oh, this is not realistic so please don't, we're not going to do this". No, you have to tell them tactfully, and frankly that there is also another way to do something

The last one is emotional stability. I think this is a really personal skill, and I think there should be a line between private and business. So in private and in general, you need to be an emotional stable person, of course, but I think it's best to not show this much emotional things in your business relationship. I think you have to see this apart, emotional involvement that's in a private situation, of course, but if I'm switching from private to business when I'm at the office. So the emotional part is a little bit on the background. If I'm having trouble with my boyfriend, for example, I shouldn't bring that to work because I'm in a business situation and the business is going on and advertisers still count on me. So I think this should be a little bit of the background. Of course, you need to be emotionally stable so you can give a good response to the advertisers, but the impact shouldn't be this big. business.

HOW IMPORTANT IS EXTRAVERSION AND SHARING IDEAS WITHIN AWIN AS A GROUP?

Well, what I see in Awin is that we have a mix of personalities and this is what I really appreciate because you can learn from each other so if you're not outgoing you can learn to be a little bit more outgoing, or the other way around. So, I think that at the moment there is a nice mix.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

Well I think as an Account Manager, especially, you need to be an accessible person for all the people around you. So, from each level in the company, from each level of advertisers or publishers, you need to be accessible. You can be accessible by having an open mindset, have good communication skills, that you're available in times people need you, or you communicate when you're available for them.

Next to that, I think having the advertiser's goal top of mind is really important and that you make the difference by searching for the opportunities for the advertisers. What I see, especially in the key account management team is that you should be a sparring partner for the advertiser. This is why they are in the key account

management team, so you need a little bit of background in online marketing so how is one channel has its effect on affiliate and the other way around. So, also knowledge about the online marketing landscape, etc.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS AN EXTENSION OF THE TEAM OF THE ADVERTISER WORKING FOR?.

Yes, I do. I'm part of the online marketing team, and I give them advice on how they should do things or not do things and have the discussion with them. Also, I think it's important that you are able to change the mindset of the advertiser if needed.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIR, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

Tactful so in the communication with the advertiser and the publisher it is really important that you are able to communicate tactfully, especially when you would like to achieve something like a goal for a publisher or just for the advertiser. Sometimes one of the parties is a little bit inflexible because they have straightforward company goals, which are focused on having to achieve performance, like the cost per clicks, the leads, etc. Sometimes you have to change your mind a little bit, and maybe invest something in branding, which comes indirectly, or will have an impact indirectly on the leads. So I think that's, that's an important one.

The second one is thoughtful, it is important to have a helicopter view and see how your advertiser and parties are involved, and what the influence is of all the decisions you make on all the parties. So you need to be thoughtful about the communication and your advice that you give to your advertisers and parties.

Goal-oriented, the advertiser is goal-oriented so you need to have these goals top of mind. We are a performance-based channel so goals are the topic that we are talking about. It's easy because we can count easily if we achieve the goals of the advertiser so I think this should be top of your mind the whole time.

Then the fourth is attentive, you need to have attention in conversations to get the whole story behind, sometimes an advertiser asks me, could you please place a banner over there because it's good for our branding, or whatsoever. Sometimes they ask you something and if you ask them a few more questions, instead of "okay I will do this" then you suddenly see that the question is not about the placing the banner, but it's about branding, they need more focus on branding, or they even have budget for branding, and they think that it's only bannering. So I think that that you should have full attention and focus in the conversations with the advertiser on the question behind the question.

Then I have verbally skilled so most conversations we have them via Skype or phone or email or teams or whatsoever. So, you need to be verbally strong because you can't see the non-verbally skills so this is what you show 90% of the time.

OKAY, PERFECT. I HAVE A QUESTION IN REGARDS TO THE ATTENTIVENESS BECAUSE I THINK IT RELATES A LITTLE BIT TO SHOWING YOUR AUTHORITY AND SHOWING THAT YOU KNOW BETTER WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR. HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS TO BE AUTHORITATIVE TOWARDS YOUR ADVERTISERS AND BE ABLE TO SAY, NO, WE CANNOT DO THIS?

This is also a really important part, but first, in the relationship, you need to collect all the other skills, and if you are the smartest person in the room you can be the person who tells the advertiser, no, we are not going to do this because we saw with other examples that it doesn't work or whatsoever. So yes, you need that skill also, I agree.

PERSONALLY, IN YOUR CASE, IS THIS SOMETHING ADVERTISERS RESPECT, OR ARE THEY REALLY CHALLENGING?

They really respect that.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Yes, I think it's my personal goal to assist others and to help others to grow personally. So what I would like to learn is how can I, in my communication and in my work with others be a coach in general, so that others can grow.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

Yes, sometimes I do. I have an advertiser, Cofidis. I think you know it, it is financial Institute in Belgium, and they are really critical situation now, due to Corona crisis, and I have been in contact with them for the last month, really closely so every day we're in contact or every two days. Last time I had contact with her, she told me. Look, I really want to say to you that I'm really happy with you as an Account Manager, because you're always available, you're keeping focused, if it's not possible, you tell me, you always have good advice and let me see the perspective from other sides, and this is really helpful for doing my job. Yes, that is a really positive thing.

IS THIS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS FREQUENTLY FROM THE ADVERTISER'S SIDE.

Yes, not every week, of course, because you do your job and that's it, but sometimes I receive really grateful comments, "thanks to you that respond so quickly and that you made me change my mind or whatsoever."

IS THIS KIND OF FEEDBACK ALSO GIVEN FROM AWIN'S SIDE?

Yes, from the team I think, in the account management team. Lars, one of the colleagues, just a few months ago already, I live in the south of the Netherlands near the Belgian border. So I travel a lot, every day, like two hours back and forth.

Once it was really raining and it was sad weather, I left the home at seven and it was terrible. When I arrived at the office I had a big smile because I was happy seeing everybody and "hey guys, how are you" and he told me "what the heck you have

traveled, two hours, you're totally wet because of the rain and you're still smiling, what's wrong with you?”. This was a really positive thing and he said “having this positive mindset is really nice to have in the team for the good vibe”

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS TRAITS?

The internal and external trainings that you can follow, the meetings, the one on one with your manager is always there. Well, in the beginning, it was a little bit tough on my side because we were always talking about the performance and I had a discussion with Thomas (manager) that I would like to have some personal development discussions in these meetings. Then we changed it and now we have all these discussions with each other and it worked out really good

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Well, one thing that I think should change is that the culture of Awin is a little bit of a gossip culture. I don't know if you recognized this, but I can imagine that some people don't feel comfortable to give another person advice on personal development skills or character traits, or whatsoever because they don't feel that if you give the advice that the person is open-minded and will not talk about the person who gives the advice to another person. So I think that the gossip culture should be a little bit less before you can give feedback.

DOES THAT RELATE TO BEING ABLE TO GIVE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK OR JUST GIVE FEEDBACK IN GENERAL?

Feedback in general, maybe It would be good to have some kind of training every half year or yearly on how to give feedback so that it's top of mind that feedback is needed for personal growth so that everybody has the skills to give good feedback. I think that's also an important thing.

AND WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE GOSSIP CULTURE AS YOU SAID IS NEGATIVELY IMPACTING THE PEOPLE THAT DO RECEIVE GOOD FEEDBACK BECAUSE THEY JUST THINK WELL IT'S JUST THIS PERSON THAT SAID IT?

Well, in general, I don't think so, it's just how you receive the feedback. So, for some people, especially younger persons within Awin with their first job here at Awin, I think we should have some more coaching with the handling of feedback or giving feedback, etc.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

Well, I think the most important thing is if you start a job somewhere else that you are open-minded and that you start with zero. So, let go of all the things that you learned on from other work for a moment and just adapt to everything that is told to you in the beginning of your years or months within Awin, and see if you can take some part from your other work to Awin and then make a combination of all the things you've learned. I think that's the most important thing. And if you're open-minded you can adapt easily to the culture of another company.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

Well, she will be a female, with an open and honest communicative attitude. I think she's really active in different kinds of ways, so proactive in some kind of way to the advertisers, to the employees, to the outside world. And a little bit funny, she is outgoing and happy.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

I think that in the way of being open-minded and getting the answer to the question behind the question and give feedback if needed.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

Well if you start working for an advertiser, I think the hardest part is to achieve trust in you as a person from the advertiser perspective, and trust comes with your experiences, with previous jobs, with knowledge about the online marketing landscape, also the knowledge about the influence of different channels on affiliate. So this is the hardest part and this is the part where you work your ass off in the beginning of the relationship so for the first couple of months you need to show up, and you need to create this trust and from the advertiser side.

The easiest part of my job, sharing data and knowledge about Awin and the benchmarks and especially the telecommunication segment. We do have all these advertisers in our portfolio. So we can share the affiliate landscape and the movement of every advertiser. So, the part of their share in the market, etc. and this is really important and you can achieve trust in from advertiser side if you share these kinds of information and that they know that you are looking for other opportunities and you know the market and you know how it works.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT MANAGER TOLD ME, WELL HE TOLD ME IN ONE OF THESE INTERVIEWS. HE EXPLAINED TO ME THAT HE THINKS AWIN DOES A GREAT JOB OF HAVING THE INFORMATION BUT NOT STORING, A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE IN THEIR BRAINS, BUT IF THESE PEOPLE LEAVE THAT AWIN MIGHT FACE A PROBLEM, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

It's totally true and this is a big threat. We have to protect every information that the person is learning in general in Awin, that we would we keep the information so Salesforce is one of the platforms that we should collect all the information from, and it should work fine for Account Managers and at the moment it's not working. So we should improve that.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

I think the most important part, in general, is that you are able to be a sparring partner for your advertiser, especially within the key account management team and that advertiser sees you as a sparring partner.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

Well, what I do like is that everybody looks a little bit like the personality of Awin which I described a few questions before. So that's what I like about the persons. I

really like the whole culture of Awin so having fun together but also working really hard and having the right mindset In general.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK? WHY?

The first question is why is the meeting so urgent for both of them? what is the urgency? Is it a task that I should do? Is it a task that I should do this Friday? or can it be on Monday? Is it a task that somebody else could do? Is it a task that they can split up and where I can work together with somebody else so that we can both assist the advertisers? That's what comes up in my mind. I can't tell you based on this information because I don't know what the urgency is.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No, I don't think so, well prepared, my compliments for the questions asked, the preparation, the invite and it's really professional

Interviewer: Obinna Odenigbo
Interviewee: Lola Van Jaarsveld
Date: Thursday the 23rd of April
Location: Microsoft Teams (Videoconference)

IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS INTERVIEW?

Yes.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

My name is Lola, of course, I'm feminine. I'm a woman. I'm actually in a team of Obinna. A little bit about myself I grew up in a small village close to the province of Utrecht, Utrecht is a city close to Amsterdam and it's actually smaller, but it also has the canals and a student ambiance. I did my primary school in the village where I'm from, then I went to high school in a city next to my village. From there, after completing high school I started studying international business and languages at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht, I also lived there as a student. During my studies I had to go abroad because I was also studying languages and it was actually obligatory to also do an internship abroad, and also study abroad so I went for an internship in Paris for four months was also the first time living by myself so very exciting. Then I did my Erasmus because that's what it's called, which you did in Madrid for six months. I also did an intensive Spanish course prior to the Erasmus period so I went a bit earlier which was very nice. My graduation internship I did in a Brazilian company and their headquarters are in Brazil, so I went for one month to Brazil. I was very lucky, it's quite exceptional and I realized that as well. Then I continued working in the Amsterdam office for the other four months, and during summer I worked there as well because they offered me a temporary job and after that, I did a sales job, and then in 2017 I joined Awin as an Account Manager, and it's almost three years now.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT AWIN?

Almost three years

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT AWIN AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

So, what we have is a unique platform that actually measures and tracks the results of what advertisers do from one website to the other. So one website is promoting the other website basically. Of course, you want to know the results of what's being done, for example, banners or links in articles or more references to the webshop, and there needs to be a platform that tracks this and that's something that Awin those. So we're basically the network in between this relationship between publisher and advertiser.

What I do is I have my client portfolio and I advise them on how to optimize the relationships with publishers and how to be more visible at the websites of the publishers and that can be in various forms

NAME 3 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU AT WORK.

I think you need to be analytical, you need to be a good communicator and also be honest. It's nice if you like to have a relationship if you like communicating with other people. So, these are two, actually, I think so good communicator, and the need to be analytical and then the last one, I think you need to be passionate about online marketing, and you want to be like on top of the new things in online marketing.

WHEN EVALUATING YOURSELF WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONALITY TRAITS WOULD YOU CONSIDER MOST AND LEAST IMPORTANT. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT) AND EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE THIS RANKING. CHOICES: EMOTIONAL STABILITY, CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION.

I think they're all important. I would say the first one, I think, emotional stability. A person's ability to remain stable and balanced. It's important that you don't overreact, for example, you are actually kind of the consultant, so of course, you can have your own expertise and opinion, but it's also important to remain stable and balanced and don't be aggressive and like bring things very tactfully.

So then I also come to the second one, I think comes conscientiousness so how self-disciplined and organized a person is. That's also important because it makes your work more easy, especially in ad if you have like 50 clients and I think one of the things that you can struggle most with. For me personally, in the beginning, it was so much that I didn't know how to organize it, but it's a very important one.

Three, openness to new experiences. So how open-minded and authority challenging a person is because that's also touching upon your creativeness. So how creative you are and also I noticed that advertisers appreciate this very much.

Fourth, agreeableness, so they are actually in the right order, and then the latest one extraversion. Maybe, at first sight, you will think, oh extraversion is the best, but it is not. I don't think that's the most important, because there are some colleagues that are not very extroverted, and they are very good Account Managers.

IN YOUR OWN OPINION, WHAT MAKES/CHARACTERIZES A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT AWIN?

I think you need to like the place where you work because then you also send that message to your advertisers so you need to be on top of the Awin values. Like I said, you need to be analytical, I think that makes a good Account Manager. That you know which performance data are important and how to distinguish this and also you need to like to build on a good relationship with your advertisers and you need to be someone that's reliable and honest. Like if you invest in something and you knew in advance that it's not going to be successful, then it's even better to say it.

Especially at Awin, it's a culture that you need to be good with your colleagues because we're all very young, relatively young. It's important that you know where to find your colleagues, I think Awin has a unique culture that's especially nice for young people.

I WILL SEND YOU A LIST OF CHARACTER TRAITS THROUGH THE CHAT FUNCTION. PLEASE SELECT THE 5 CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ACCORDING TO YOU MAKE A GOOD ACCOUNT MANAGER AT

AWIN + FOR EACH ONE EXPLAIN WHY. CHOICES: AUTHORITATIVE, TACTFUL, CERTAIN, OPEN-MINDED, DEBONAIRE, SENSITIVE, SELF-ASSURED, HUMBLE, COURAGEOUS, THOUGHTFUL, GOAL-ORIENTED, COMPASSIONATE, PROTECTIVE, SOCIAL, EASY-GOING, OUTGOING, AMBITIOUS, ATTENTIVE, ACTIVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTION-ORIENTED, VERBALLY SKILLED.

Okay, I think you need to be certain. So the things you're saying you need to agree with it because if you're certain of something, the advertiser is also going to be certain because they are going to believe you, they pay you for your advice.

You need to be goal-oriented because, in the end, we want to get a nice gross profit from the advertisers. So you also need to think about what is in it for Awin, but I won't think too much about that because it's also at the benefit of your advertiser.

Therefore, I think you also need to be compassionate

You need to be tactful and sensitive, because I think if you're sensitive, then you're also humble and courageous so I think that explains it.

IS IT HARD TO PERSUADE AN ADVERTISER OF SOMETHING?

Yes, sometimes because if there's no other option, then you need to be the one that is authoritative and that's sometimes very difficult because sometimes I have a tendency to say okay, you're right.

WHICH TRAITS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO IMPROVE ON AND WHY?

Maybe a bit more tactful sometimes, but that's maybe when I'm not familiar with the situation and then I should be more tactful. Maybe even more goal-oriented, I think you can always improve that.

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK AT WORK ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS?

IF YES, FROM WHOM (TEAM LEADER, COLLEAGUES, HR, ..?). WAS THIS ONCE OR DOES THIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY? WHAT WAS THE OCCASION (FOR EXAMPLE A PERFORMANCE REVIEW)? WAS THIS FEEDBACK MAINLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

Yes, from my manager.

During my contract conversations (with clients). So that's maybe two to four times a year. Other times this may be in situations, on a meeting for example, if together with Niels (manager) to a meeting and then he's giving me feedback afterwards. It can be for example, during a contract discussion that he says I want you to be more commercial and if your commercial then you're also more goal-oriented.

A mix of both. If it's negative, then he says, it's something to learn from.

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON (IMPROVE) YOUR (PROFESSIONAL) PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER TRAITS?

Yes, but you need to take the initiative. Mostly get together with your manager, and then, with the help of the OKRs you're going to define your goals and then you invent projects on how to improve this for example.

DO YOU THINK TRAININGS AND THE AWIN ACADEMY HELPS WITH THIS?

I think it helps, but the Awin Academy is not very frequent, so maybe once in six months. In the beginning, we have a lot of trainings when you're a new Account Manager, but afterwards, there's not so much anymore. Like if you work at Awin for three years then you don't get so much trainings on these kinds of topics.

IF SO, THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM WERE YOU ABLE TO IMPROVE ON THIS? WAS THIS EFFECTIVE?

I think there could be more trainings from the Academy when you pass a certain experience. So when you are at Awin for almost three years, for example, and then look into which other competencies are important, and where you want to learn more. For example, external trainings all trainings are inside and it's not, for example, Google training or obtaining your certificates about a certain marketing skill. That will be very nice.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW ACCOUNT MANAGER OR YOURSELF AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER AT AWIN?

Everyone does it differently, but if I look back now on how I started, I would have done it differently. When I started, I was super proactive and I actually wanted to do everything at one time, which is not really possible. Compared to other colleagues, for example, they were immediately very personal so they really wanted to be friends with other colleagues and I was very work focused and that's often not a very good tactic. Of course, it's good that you are really involved with your work, but I felt like I had to do a lot. Whilst, in the beginning, it is maybe more important to build a good relationship with your colleagues instead of only focusing on work because, in the end, no one knows who you are or what you're doing.

IF AWIN WERE A PERSON, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PERSON (MALE/ FEMALE? LOOK? PERSONALITY? ..)

I think Awin is open-minded, courageous, they can take a risk, compassionate about affiliate marketing and they're ambitious they always talk about the future. For example with the OKRs that are being presented on a global level, but also on a BENELUX level.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AWIN REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? WHAT ARE THEY ALREADY DOING WELL AND WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

I think what they're doing good is that they are very open-minded to new initiatives and opportunities. What they can do better, I think they can be more social and humble about their personnel sometimes. Well, for example, there were people in our organization that got a burnout and we don't know anything about them. I understand that it's private and some people say that it is private, but I just wondered how close they were with these people. For example, to me, something happened with my family, like a time ago and I do think that some people are involved, but it could be a bit more because what if I would get burn-out and what if I am I am not able to concentrate on my work, no one is asking me for that.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST AND EASIEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The hardest, keeping a structure, I have so many clients, so many emails, so many contact points. Staying on top of everything, like I would love to have 10 clients, for example, instead of 50. So that's what I find the hardest and also the thing that I'm most dislike.

What I find easiest is just to have a nice chat with advertisers about their social life and I think because I worked in sales before that I'm quite good on the phone. So for me, talking with an advertiser, I am not nervous or something.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?

Being curious, it's not good if you assume everything as "that's the logic". It's always good to ask why.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE WORK FLOOR AND FORCE AT AWIN?

The Awin culture and that everyone is always open to help even the tech people because they have an expertise and sometimes really hard to understand but, they are so involved.

ADVERTISER X HAS BEEN A VERY ADVERTISER FOR AWIN FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS BUT HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE REVENUE STREAM RUNNING DURING THIS PERIOD. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE ADVERTISER Y THAT IS NEW TO THE AWIN AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND IS MAKING A LOT OF REVENUE. THEY BOTH ASK FOR AN URGENT MEETING ON FRIDAY.

WHO WOULD YOU MEET AND WHO WOULD YOU RESCHEDULE FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK?

I think it's not a difficult question I would say the client that has been there for 10 years.

WHY?

Because they performed well before and now that their revenue is decreasing It's important to stay on top of this, and you know that the potential is there, so you know already what is advertiser was able to do. Also, it's a loyal client because they've been there for 10 years and then I would say for example the new client can go the week after.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS IN LINE WITH COMPANY VALUES AND WHAT YOUR MANAGER EXPECTS FROM YOU?

I think he would say the same. I would be surprised if he would say something different.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING REMARKS?

No.

5.7 Appendix G – Masculine and feminine character traits

These are the main character traits that were used during field research. They are either masculine or feminine. Most character traits mentioned in interviews are categorized using these character traits.

Character traits	
<u>Masculine</u>	<u>Feminine</u>
Authoritative	Tactful
Certain	Sensitive
Debonair	Humble
Self-assured	Thoughtful
Goal-oriented	Compassionate
Protective	Social
Ambitious	Attentive
Active	Empathetic
Action-oriented	Verbally skilled
Open-minded	Caring
Easy-going	Outgoing

Table 8: Masculine and feminine character traits

(Attractionlab, 2020; Hofstede Insights, 2020)

5.8 Appendix H – Count per character trait

Character traits	Total	Mike Kramer	Ivan telg	Jeanette De Haan	Jia Jia Ye	Julia Rahimi Rigi	Justin Van Hilten	Lars Van Egmonds	Lola Van Jaarsveld	Lucas Baart	Puck smaal
Goal-oriented	9	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tactful	8	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1
Ambitious	5	1	1			1		1		1	
Verbally skilled	5				1	1		1		1	1
Action-oriented	3		1	1						1	
Emphatic	3			1	1	1					
Social	3			1			1	1			
Self-assured	2	1						1			
Compassionate	2		1						1		
thoughtful	2			1							1
open-mindedness	2				1		1				
Authoritative	1	1									
humble	1				1						
active	1						1				
Certain	1								1		
sensitive	1								1		
attentive	1										1

Table 9: Count per character trait

5.9 Appendix I – Ranking system of the Big Five Personality traits

Big Five Personality Traits	Account Managers									
	Mike Kramer	Ivan Telg	Jeanette de Haan	Jia Jia Ye	Julia Rahimi Rigi	Justin van Hilten	Lars van Egmond	Lola van Jaarsveld	Lucas Baart	Puck smaal
Conscientiousness	1	1	0,4	0,2	0,8	1	0,8	0,8	0,6	0,8
Emotional stability	0,8	0,8	0,6	0,8	1	0,2	1	1	0,4	0,2
Agreeableness	0,2	0,6	1	1	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,4	0,8	0,4
Openness to new experiences	0,6	0,4	0,8	0,6	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,6	0,2	1
Extraversion	0,4	0,2	0,2	0,4	0,2	0,8	0,2	0,2	1	0,6

Table 10: Ranking system of the Big Five Personality Traits

Big Five Personality Traits						
	<u>First place</u>	<u>Second place</u>	<u>Third place</u>	<u>Fourth place</u>	<u>Fifth place</u>	<u>Total score</u>
Conscientiousness	3	4	1	1	1	7,4
Emotional stability	3	3	1	1	2	6,8
Agreeableness	2	1	4	2	1	6,2
Openness to new experiences	1	1	3	4	1	5,4
Extraversion	1	1	1	2	5	4,2

Table 11: Ranking system of The Big Five Personality Traits

