

Joanne Watson, Technology Lead - Digital & Personalisation

What did you study and where?

For my BSc I studied Applied and Analytical Chemistry, after that I went to work for a pigment manufacturer up in Leeds. I knew nothing about colour so asked the company if they would support me completing the University of Leeds' part time MSc in Colour Application Technology, which they did. I thoroughly enjoyed studying again and learning all about colour was fascinating. After completing the MSc and a couple more years of work, I made the decision to go back to university full time and complete a PhD. Everyone thought I was crazy at the time but it's one of the best things I ever did.

Have you always loved science?

I have always loved science and I still love science today. I never had any problems choosing what GCSEs or A levels to do as all I ever wanted to study was all three science subjects. Chemistry was my favourite of the three and I knew that was what I wanted to study at University. I never really knew what job I wanted to do, I just knew I wanted to study science as I found it all so interesting.

Did you ever experience any adversity getting into science because of your gender?

I've been very fortunate in that my gender has never hindered what I wanted to do, or at least not that I am aware of. I've worked in some very male dominated areas but was always treated as an equal.

How did you get into your role today? Did you always have an interest in applying science to beauty?

As with most of my roles over the years, I just kind of fell into working in the beauty industry. I worked in the paint industry for a number of years and it was only by going back to the University of Leeds to complete my PhD did I end up in beauty. My PhD was spent looking to optimise the colour of cosmetic formulations so as I got more involved I realised that I'd like to keep working in beauty once my PhD was complete.

What made you want to work for No7 Beauty Company?

No7 is an iconic brand in the UK and as my PhD had been linked to beauty it seemed like the perfect fit. At the time I didn't know that their R&D facilities were located in the UK, so once my PhD was over and I was looking for a role I was delighted to find they were recruiting and the role was in the UK. It felt like it was meant to be.

How do you apply science to your job?

I'm very lucky in the fact that I get to apply what I learned about colour science in my MSc and PhD to the work that I do. I've been able to use my knowledge of colour in the development of No7 foundation shades and in the development of lots of colour cosmetics. It's very rewarding.

What is your favourite part of your current role?

I always love being presented with a problem to solve and working as part of a team to come up with solutions. We are always looking at problems our consumers have, be it trying to find the right foundation, knowing what products they should be using to keep their skin in tip top condition, and how we might solve them. I love brainstorming all the different things we could do to solve their issues and then just start trying some things out to see if they work. Getting to a solution is really satisfying and actually seeing a product you developed on the shelves in store is very rewarding.

What is your favourite No7 Beauty Company product, and why?

Well, you guessed it, it's one that's linked to colour! I love No7 eyeshadows, I love the breadth of colour and the fact that you can play around with them to get different looks and effects. It's all about the eyes for me.

Finally, do you have any advice for girls or women who would like to get into science?

Just go for it! If you have an interest in science, follow it, even if you can't imagine where you will end up. There are so many possibilities that you'll end up doing something you love. I would never have imagined I'd be doing what I'm doing today but it seems like I found where I'm supposed to be.

