

Audrey Wu

Vice President, ThinkGen



Specializing in Habit EngineeringSM

How exactly did an MIT graduate with a degree in chemical engineering and four patents end up working as a market researcher for ThinkGen? ThinkGen Vice President Audrey Wu says that her four years in polymer research, followed by getting her MBA with a concentration in marketing at the University of Michigan, prompted her to seek a way to combine the things that interested her. That led her to the world of pharmaceutical marketing and healthcare market research, and she hasn't looked back after nearly 20 years.

Trained to see the world through different perspectives

Audrey's foray into the industry was a job with a pharmaceutical company in a rotation program that trained high-potential employees to learn the different functional areas of the business. She worked as a primary care sales rep and supported market research for a blockbuster drug during its launch year before moving into a product management role. What she found most impactful about that experience was her time in the field sales position, because it helped her think through marketing campaigns from a practical, in-the-trenches perspective. This perspective is something she continues to apply in her work today. For example, when working with attitudinal segments, Audrey knows that implementing a visual aid with separate stories for particular segments isn't realistic without the proper technology. Audrey recognizes that she wouldn't understand this the same way if she hadn't had the experience as a sales rep herself.

Similarly, Audrey knows that her first, albeit short-lived career

in the chemical engineering discipline helped her see how to pull things apart and put them back together again in a way tailored to specific design challenge. When she was trained as an engineer, everything was about how things fit together and how they need to fit together. This perspective has also aided her in her healthcare market research career.

Being able to view things from various perspectives was engrained in Audrey from an early age by her father, who worked as a copy editor when she was growing up in New Jersey. Not only was he keen to ensure Audrey's writing skills were impeccable, but he would regularly bring home articles to show her and have her compare how *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *Associated Press* each reported on the same topic but with varied perspectives on the same issue.

From marketing to market research

Audrey advanced in her career as a pharmaceutical marketer, taking on roles of increasing scope and scale. In 2011, as the head of marketing for a company with a focus in women's health, Audrey met ThinkGen Founder and CEO Noah Pines. Noah had been recommended by their advertising agency, and quickly became her team's preferred vendor partner.

Several years later, after Audrey moved to Seattle to be near family, Noah suggested that she join ThinkGen.

By then, Audrey was a Vice President at a specialty pharmaceutical company and had experienced hundreds of market research projects. Initially, she thought she wouldn't



enjoy moving into MR, assuming she'd just be listening to 30 of the same conversations every day. (Of course, she later realized it's 30 different conversations, which makes it fascinating.)

Eventually, Audrey made the leap. Any concerns she ever had about whether or not she'd like working in MR were squashed with her first project. She loved that first project and at that point in her career, with the experiences she'd had, Audrey knew how and when to dig in deeper. One of the most rewarding things for Audrey about working in MR is distilling the findings of a project into the few insights that will really move the needle for the brand.

One particularly impactful moment in Audrey's career was when she received a call from a recruiting partner for a study that involved interviewing patients and care partners who lived with a rare, life-threatening condition. He was calling to let her know that the patients thanked him for including them in the research, and that the conversations were helpful to them because they felt heard and they were contributing to something important. They believed that their experience mattered. The recruiter said he had to call to tell her because he hardly ever heard this from their patient panelists. It reminded Audrey that the best market research partners include a component of real human connection and bring forward the voice of the stakeholder – something that ThinkGen uniquely provides.

Recognizing the importance of habits

One of the most rewarding and impactful experiences of Audrey's career has been her contribution to the conception of ThinkGen's Habit EngineeringSM methodology. In 2015, she was working on a project with Noah for a medication that was once the most prescribed medication in its class. The company had allocated resources away from the medication and was now ready to re-launch it. Audrey's company had commissioned Noah and ThinkGen to work on this project.

She happened to be reading a book about "microresolutions" - how small behavioral changes targeted intentionally at interrupting autopilot can lead to major impact. As Noah moderated the interviews, she recognized the factors that led physicians to prescribe the medication on a routine basis.

Audrey knew their current marketing plans were not taking that into consideration; instead, they were designed as if physicians considered multiple treatment options each time they saw a patient. She realized that the key was actually to get doctors back into the habit of prescribing the medication. She asked Noah if he had a methodology that would support this, but at the time, he did not.

Innovating through Habit EngineeringSM

Fast forward to Audrey working at ThinkGen in 2018. Noah had injured his arm and was scheduled to have surgery, and Audrey sent him a gift basket. Noah called to thank her, and then explained that he couldn't have the surgery because he had accidentally eaten before the procedure.

On the day of the surgery, Noah had gone about his normal daily routine: he worked out, and then came home and ate a breakfast bar. Despite being reminded by the surgeon, nurses, coordinators, and his family not to eat before the surgery, he had eaten the breakfast bar out of habit.

Audrey reminded Noah about the project they had worked on together in 2015, and asked why we act as if messaging over and over again is sufficient from a marketing perspective. That day, Noah began a deep dive into all things habit. It was seeing it through this valuable lens in 2015 that ultimately got the ball rolling for ThinkGen to launch its Habit EngineeringSM methodology.

Going beyond learnings to insights

Audrey loves working for ThinkGen primarily because of the people – she appreciates the opportunity to work with like-minded colleagues who are passionate and laser-focused on finding the key market insights that matter. Audrey is inspired by the questions that clients bring to ThinkGen. After almost 20 years in the industry, she knows the critical role of market research in ensuring that life-changing medications ultimately help people live healthier lives. At ThinkGen, she knows the passion the team has for the work helps ensure that it is meaningful work.

As much as Audrey loves her job at ThinkGen, she also loves her city of Seattle. One of the reasons she moved to Seattle was to be near her family and she spends much of her free time with her sister, her 11-year-old niece, 13-year-old nephew, and their puppy Autumn. In non-pandemic times, Audrey can be found enjoying the amazing Seattle restaurant culture and taking classes at a community kitchen, as well as visiting all the great sites and outdoor activities Seattle has to offer.

