

The New Generation of Women in Promo

September 2026, Istanbul. The IPPAG gala dinner.

The restaurant is filled with founders of branded merchandising leaders, from more than 35 countries. I'm the youngest person in the room, standing on stage, singing a cappella, alone, as tradition dictates for first-timers.

My song: "Feeling Good" by Nina Simone for some, Muse for others... Michael Bublé for me. Draw your own conclusions about my generation! ;)

I was nervous before stepping onto the stage. But somewhere along the way, I actually started *feeling good*.

I'm Emma André, 26 years old, in charge of AI and Innovation at Synneo, France's leading promotional products agency. That week, I flew home with the IPPAG **"Most Inspiring Changemaker Award"** (probably more for the project I shared than for my singing skills!!)

And yet, just 5 years ago, I didn't even know this industry existed.

An exciting industry no one had ever told me about

During 6 years of studying at 4 different business schools, specialising in marketing and innovation, no one had ever mentioned promotional products as a media channel...

Not once.

In 2021, as I was finishing my first Master's degree, I was looking for an internship in innovation. So I posted a video CV on LinkedIn. Thanks to a neighbour, Synneo's Sales Director came across it and offered me an internship.

Communication through objects? What is that? Even after searching online, it still felt quite vague. Then I joined the company, and I started to understand.

The mugs my father brought home from work, which I enjoyed receiving and even asked for, were actually... advertising. The pens sitting on my desk, the flashlight I carried in my bag, the beer opener on my student keyring: without even realising it, branded merchandise was already part of my everyday environment.

From there, I discovered an industry that never stopped feeding my curiosity. For client projects, the creative possibilities are almost endless: you can create anything from a watch to a suitcase or a deck of cards. Behind the scenes, the agency itself brings together a wide range of roles, from sales and design to website creation, and beyond.

From Products to Processes: an Innovation journey

I started by developing and launching innovative patented products that helped Synneo stand out in the French market.

Then I had the opportunity to lead the launch of the official e-shop for *Top Chef*, the French equivalent of *MasterChef*, broadcast by one of France's largest TV channel groups.

As Project Lead, there was so much to manage that I started automating some of my own tasks with code, just as ChatGPT was beginning to emerge.

So when the Top Chef project came to an end, I walked into Synneo's directors' office with a question: if I could automate some of my own work, **why not help the rest of the team save time on their own repetitive tasks too?**

They immediately supported the idea and put me in charge of creating and leading Synneo's AI & Innovation department!

... some of my colleagues were less convinced at first. Together with the Board, we helped them understand that AI won't replace them, but rather take over the tasks they enjoy least, so they can focus on where they bring the most value, and develop new skills.

Our Design Team, for example, now uses AI alongside their creative expertise to produce mock-ups, lifestyle visuals, amazing videos...much faster. This has freed up time for them to learn tools they always wanted to master, dive deeper into specific projects, and much more.

Looking back, this whole journey led me to one simple question, which I shared with IPPAG peers during my talk at the Istanbul seminar:

"What ideas would you propose to your clients, if development costs weren't an issue anymore?" Because today, that answer is a quote we can actually send.

Feeling Good in Istanbul

Honestly, being the youngest person in a room filled with some of the most inspiring leaders in the industry was already pushing me outside my comfort zone. Luckily, after living in Spain, Chile and England, I'm used to international crowds, so breaking the ice felt less intimidating...

...but singing a cappella, alone, in front of all of them?? That took the jitters to a whole new level!

IPPAG calls its members **changemakers**. Now I understand why.

Change does not happen inside your comfort zone. It starts when you push the boundaries, challenge existing ways of thinking, and are bold enough to share your ideas with your industry peers.

In the end, **change starts with daring to take a risk.**

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