About me:

Hopefully from the new "variable" I created you'll find that my name is Alexandra (O'Mahony) and I'm applying to the Winter Cohort for Founders and Coders.

A bit about me: well I'm big on adventure and challenges. I did French, Spanish and history at university and have been able to use my languages as I travel to meet new people and learn as much as I can about where I'm living. In my time abroad, I've learnt to dance Salsa, Bachata and Merengue and I've improved (I hope) my travel photography too. I'm a people person and as you'll seenin my image carousel below, they are mostly the subjects in my photography.

It's been two years since I graduated from the University of Nottingham. In the first year I worked in a micro-loans charity, Deki, in Bristol and then moved to the Dominican Republic to work with UN Women as part of their e-learning campus. There I was involved with the creation of online courses, from research to packaging and the program coordination of face-to-face trainings - in French, Spanish and English. I was really lucky to be able build on my teaching experiences and to work on the International Office of Migration's (IOM) course on Gender in Migration.

Issues around migration were what most motivated to work with charities or for Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). I've learnt load from both experiences however, I found the pace of work too slow and the level of responsibility restricted. And so, I decided to work for a tech start-up where I knew I could find more of both.

Learning to code

In October last year I started working at Personably in a sales role. We were all encouraged to take initiative in our jobs, and I was very quickly taking on projects to improve our sales process. When I showed an interest in learning coding basics so that I could understand what was going on in product meetings, the founders were really encouraging.

I started a beginner’s course with Code First: Girls on the basics of building a website and as the weeks went on I got more and more hooked.

The working environment at Personably also helped change my perception of the tech industry. Our team worked collaboratively and as a young start-up there was a sense too that we were all learning together and we were encouraged to give feedback and learn from each other. It was really exciting to be able to take on projects of my own and see changes being made in real time. Previously, I had thought of the tech industry as a world where people hid behind computer screens never speaking to their colleagues. Or the more recent trend of tech start-ups (in San-Francisco especially) of male dominated environments where a lad culture persisted. Neither of these appealed to me and I think have put off lots of people like me.

I’ve been able to find a lot of those people by joining groups and attending events with [codebar.io](http://codebar.io), NodeGirls, React.JS Girls and more, that support minorities in tech. Now I'm feeling really positive about the future of the tech industry and of my place in it.

When I finished the first Code First: Girls cohort I started using FreeCodeCamp and decided I wanted t. Two of my colleagues I worked with at Personably are FAC alumni and they encouraged me to look into the program. I really like the model that FAC work by. For me the best way to learn is through full immersion and teaching yourself. I also really enjoyed the community aspect of the course, with each cohort teaching the previous, and an emphasis on pair-programming and learning together. This ethos and the support available have helped so far in my way of learning and so I really want that to continue!

What I've Learnt

https://youtu.be/dkl6sYff2C8?t=16743

Well...I could write a very, very long list of things I wish I had known before starting my website! From little things such as making sure the script tags are at the end of the html, and how to use the 'pre' tag, to the big things such as flex box and grids - and of course the carousel struggles! All in all though, I'm really happy with my website and how much I've learnt from Codewars and Free Code Camp in the past couple of months.

Back in May I watched a talk about the easy steps to introducing basic accessibility into your website by Marcy Sutton at the ReactJS Girls conference. The two main tips I took away were: make sure your entire website could be accessed via the keyboard (i.e. using the tab key, enter etc not the mouse) and use Chrome developer tools to check the visibility of your font colour vs. background colour. So from the outset these two things were really important for me to be able to achieve, as I want accessibility to be considered in every project I do.

My favourite colour is orange and so, using the Chrome dev tools, I found an orange that was easily viewed on a white and pale orange background. I then used only three more colours on my website: white, black and grey, and in doing so I was able to maintain consistency throughout with the visible accessibility I wanted!

You're able to navigate through all links in the entire website using the tab and enter keys on the menu or up and down using the arrow keys. I also really wanted to introduce key functions into my carousel Javascript. You'll be able to use the space bar to pause and the left and right arrow keys to scroll through the images.

One big lesson I took from someone on the current cohort was that the little things can make a big difference. I've added animations such as transitions on loading, smooth scrolling and more and they've made such a difference, in my opinion, to the polished feel of the end product. Of course it's also really important to inject a bit of personality into the website - and so the header "variable" although a little gimicky was fun to put in.

Finally the thing I kept coming back to was readability in my code. I've been in a constant state of learning while doing and while some days I've been able to create loads of code and understand it, days later I might come back and not understand what or why I did something. And so I've used lots of comments in my Javascript and headers in my html and css.

I think that leads well into what I would like to improve. I feel like, particularly in my css, there was a lot of repetition in my code and with that, whenever I made changes I could easily lose consistency throughout the whole doc. I had also planned to do the Free Code Camp lessons in CSS, Grids and Flexibility as I went along. However, looking back I wish I'd had all that information available before I started the project!