

KAREN JACKSON – MANAGING DIRECTOR, CPM UK

1. What was your first ever job?

After a Saturday job at Superdrug, my first ever full-time job was as a junior at Natwest Bank and that involved hand printing customer cheque books – personalising each cheque with the customer's name and account number using a customer personalised printing plate. In the afternoon, addressing envelopes for cheque books, franking the envelopes and taking them to the post office – this probably shows you how old I am!!!!



2. Describe the journey you have taken to get the role you have today

I stayed at Natwest in the north of England for 6 years and then the only way to develop my career in what was a very male dominated industry was to move to London and work in a Natwest HO division. I worked in the marketing dept and developed my career but also my marketing and agency skills as I worked with many large above and below the line advertising agencies. When I moved back to the north, I was then able to use these new skills to join an outsourced marketing agency where I was again able to develop my career and skills. After a few years, I was headhunted onto a board of a much smaller family agency. This taught me more about what I didn't like or wanted to do!! Private family business was not for me. Luckily 6 months into this role, a great mentor who I had worked with at Natwest and my first outsourced agency approached me to join CPM. That was in 2000. I joined in the contact centre in Warrington but wanted to develop my skills into the larger field sales side of the business. 2 opportunities came up to do this. 1) was to work CPM's largest field account which had recently undergone a transformation – so it was to keep this going or b) take over another client which was probably CPM's 5th or 6th biggest account which was not going very well, the client wasn't happy and was at that point out to tender. I love a challenge and like to put my head where it hurts so took the other role. We won the re-tender and over the next 3 years grew this client to be our largest client at that time!!! I joined the UK board in 2007 taking on new challenges such as the contact centre in Barcelona, setting up and growing sales academy, growing the contact centre to a UK £20m business and in 2014 was promoted to Managing Director. In 2017 I took 11 months out to adopt a daughter and returned to the business 7 weeks ago.

3. In your opinion working in a predominantly male oriented industry (sales) what advice would you give young women who are trying to build a career in the industry

Be confident in your own ability and don't be intimidated by the idea or old stereo type of sales (car salesman, double glazing). Sales is about relationships, trust, integrity and ultimately solving problems for people and companies – selling them something that enhances their business, lives. Women are very good at these things

4. As a leader in your business how will you strive to maintain a gender parity mindset?

At CPM, we always recruit and promote based on meritocracy (the best person for the role) However, we have seen that sometimes females do not always have the confidence and belief to put themselves forward for roles/promotions. So, as well as ensuring through our recruitment strategy, we attract the most diverse range of applicants to find the "best person for the role", we need to ensure we have programmes in place to try out roles and develop confidence. Equally sponsorship is important to development, particularly to senior roles. We therefore want to continue with our mentoring programme for all our rising stars, male or female.

5. What role do you take in life/business to help forge positive visibility of women

I have a great personal belief that you can achieve anything you want to in life if you want it enough and then do the right things to get you there. I hope being the first female Managing Director of CPM gives other females the confidence and belief that they can achieve this or way beyond this if they want to. I am a strong woman and I am a huge supporter and encourager of other women in business but also in life. I am however also a very firm believer that no one should achieve in this life just because they are female or of a certain ethnicity etc, it should be based on ability and attitude. We all need to ensure that we don't put in place glass ceilings and we provide equal opportunities for all.

6. Who was the biggest influence on your career?

After leaving corporate Bank life in 1994, I joined a small agency that was run by a real entrepreneur who had just bought the start-up business for £30,000. I learned so much from him in terms of growing a business, work ethic and the hard work you needed to put in to succeed, working in an agency and loving your clients and delivering brilliantly, doing what you say you are going to do. He sold the business 3 years later for £10m. In terms of the development of my career, I was very lucky to have 2 great female sponsors at CPM who encouraged me, championed me, and gave me the confidence to believe I could take on more senior leadership roles.

7. Is there any women in leadership that you admire outside of your organisation?

A bit obvious I know but Sheryl Sandberg. Obviously, her career speaks for itself, McKinsey, the US treasury, Google, Facebook. However, as COO of Facebook she then wrote the book "Lean In" which bared her soul on the lack of confidence she felt at times and how hard it was to juggle work and home life. I think this resonated with me and many women and gave them permission to say it was ok to sometimes feel less confident than your male counterparts and perhaps helped us understand the psyche of why we do. It helped them understand it was OK to feel the constant conflict of balance between work and children. As young widow, she has faced lots of adversity but again has also spoken out about it to help to help others. She is a champion of women, sits on many women's groups and is not afraid to speak out about things she is passionate about.

8. What advice would you give to anyone starting a career in sales?

Work hard, do what you say you are going to do, have a can-do attitude, it's all about trust and relationships

9. If you could state one characteristic that makes a strong business woman, what would that be?

Bravery - to do the right thing, face into difficult situations, put your head where it hurts, stand up for what you believe in

10. What are the few resources (books, articles, blogs etc.) you would recommend to someone to gain insight into becoming successful in life and their career?

Sheryl Sandberg's book Lean In

Jack Welch's Book – winning

Richard Branson posts some great anecdotes on leadership, being happy etc on LinkedIn