

JANE COTTRELL – TALENT DIRECTOR, CPM UK

1. What was your first ever job?

Growing up, I worked in my parent's hotel as chambermaid, waitress and barmaid. I really enjoyed working with people and learnt early on the benefit of doing what you say you will do! At college, I worked at Wallis in Oxford Street, which meant dealing with a real diverse customer. My first proper job was working in Group Travel for American Express where I looked after American tourists in London, booking their trips over, selling and taking them on guided tours of London. These roles involved working with a vast variety of different people who were all looking for something specific for themselves.

2. Describe the journey you've taken to get to the role that you are in today?

I started out as very junior CSE and quite literally worked my way up, I have always had a 'can do' attitude and so have always said yes to having a go at doing different tasks working in different channels with different clients. I enjoy and learn from the variety. I have always taken myself out of my comfort zone, faced my fears and despite some ups and downs, have never lost my sense of humour!

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?

To be authentic at all times, and demonstrate confidence, even if you don't feel it. You always need to deliver on what you promised in order to build your credibility. I also found that creating a network of people that you trust to share ideas and experiences with has been invaluable to me over the years. When I was promoted to the board, I found it difficult to adapt to the responsibility and this affected my confidence. Fortunately, the MD at the time suggested a Mentor which helped me enormously with this transition and an experience I am forever grateful for. So be yourself, be true to yourself and don't be afraid to seek support and help to progress.

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

By understanding that people are all different and being able to shift mindset and prejudice. At CPM, we believe people should all be promoted based on meritocracy, but recognise that people all have different challenges and need different levels of help and support. This is something that I have learnt over time but perhaps more relevant is that when I became a magistrate 10 years ago it made me look at things in a completely different way, suspending judgement until you get the whole picture and always acting with integrity and respect. Having different people, with different strengths, outlooks and opinions is what makes CPM the place it is today.

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

To be great role model and be the best I can be even when it's tough. I always try to be as flexible with people judging people by outputs. Being empathetic and understanding that the pressure they may be under and be able to support them balancing home and work. I fortunately have a great female boss who has always time for me and gives me the support when needed, and I try and replicate these behaviours.

6. Who was the biggest influence on your career?

Wenche Marshall Forster who was the MD of Perrier Mineral Water where I was employed as a Perrier girl selling Mineral Water. She was amazing. It was the first time that I saw at first hand a confident woman in a senior corporate position and could see how she handled people around her, getting the right balance in her approach. She really made me think that I was capable of doing more, and achieving better things, so I have her to thank for giving me the confidence to stride ahead.

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

I have worked and continue to work with some amazing women leaders who inspire me every day. But I have great admiration for my mother who left home very young to become a WREN. She then had a full-time job with 2 small children in the 1960's which at that time was very unusual and not very supported. She encouraged me to try new things and to never accept the norm. Obviously, I feel I must mention Sheryl Sanberg who is a great female trailblazer and you can't help but be in awe of her approach to business and home life, her observations on women in the workplace are well documented and brought women together in a way not seen before.

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

listen and learn and don't give up and always be prepared to move out of your comfort zone. If you don't know the answer ask and build a strong network around you.

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

Resilience, be objective, reflect, learn and review and have another go! Always be open and honest with people around you, you can't do it on your own. Treat others as you want to be treated, you get back what you put 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?

To keep up to date with what is going on in the world, and to always have a view. Try to get involved with activities outside of your job as it gives different perspective, and lastly don't become distanced from the real world. The internet is amazing for short downloads for articles and videos.