

## **JO FARNHAM – CLIENT DIRECTOR**

### **1. What was your first ever job?**

My first job after college was as a management trainee with Laura Ashley, and this gave me a great insight into the world of retail. I still remember the moment of dread when I was told it was my turn to dress the shop window which included wall papering, so nothing like learning to wallpaper with the general public watching you and giving helpful advice. I had to dig deep that day but as often is the case it wasn't as bad as I expected....

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

Ok, so I have been at CPM for over 20 years so loads to talk about and have carried out many roles with many clients. I will try and give a quick resume, here goes..... I started my career as a Band 8 Operations Executive working on clients such as IPC Magazines, and then joined the CPM Travel Unit working with clients such as Stena Sealink, Butlins, and Jersey Tourist Board. I loved this job with the opportunity to organise PR events with travel agents and taking agents on educational trips. I then moved to the tactical division where CPM gave me the opportunity to stretch myself and when I was asked to manage an experiential campaign for Silk Cut I jumped at the chance. Through some luck, hard work and support from my colleagues I was promoted to a Marketing Assistant. Life was pretty good at CPM but a new challenge was ahead, Jane Cottrell was going to be MD of a new business CPM had acquired, 'DDA' and she asked me to join her. I would be based in London, managing promotional staff in Harrods and Selfridges, oh and sharing an office with Hermes, so this sounded like my perfect job. However for those of you who have ever watched the 'Devil Where's Prada' you will know that the fashion and fragrance industry is not without it's prima donas ...I will say no more.

After a few years I returned to CPM as a Client Service Manager and one of my career defining moments was winning and working on the Boots Advantage Card campaign – we turned over £3m in 6 months! I don't want to bore you so to condense after quite a few assessment centres, aspirational RAG dials, and client director roles later I am heading up our face 2 face sales and marketing team, and my passion for winning new business hasn't gone away. My career development wouldn't have been possible without the support of my line manager and she is still some-what of a mentor to me today, and she pushed, challenged and believed in me when I doubted myself.

### **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?**

Wait until you think you are ready to take on the next opportunity...you are probably already ready, and you are not alone if at times you feel like a fraud. Remember 'fake it until you make it'. To steal from Sheryl Sandberg...'imagine what you could do if you weren't afraid'. I wish I had read her book earlier...

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

I have always judged individuals on their performance and I believe it is important to be gender neutral when we consider promotions and new recruits. I would hate to see positive discrimination just to achieve a quota. I read recently that globally it will take another 170 years until we achieve economic equality between men and women, that really isn't good enough. At CPM we can make a difference by tackling any unhelpful stereotypes and ensuring that both men and women speak up if we witness or experience 'any inappropriate behaviour'. I do believe our Talent tools and systems supports gender parity where we

measure individuals potential and performance based on merit. I am keen that we are careful not to apply tags to females who demonstrate strong behaviour as too often we apply labels that we wouldn't apply to men who demonstrate the same behaviour – 'unhelpful stereotypes'.

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

Throughout my career I have always tried to encourage women to shout about their success and publicly recognise good performance. I firmly believe in being flexible with my team who are juggling children and careers, as a little flexibility delivers greater outputs for both businesses and individuals. I have always tried to introduce women who I believe can help and support each other to create stronger networks. I am striving to be more 'human' but that's work in progress.....

**6. Who was the biggest influence on your career?**

This is difficult one....I guess there are two people...one is an ex MD of CPM, and many years ago I was at a cross roads and was offered a very senior job with another company. This individual helped me to come to the right decision and I guess that's why I am still at CPM today. I have to recognise Jane Cottrell our Talent Director for challenging me and helping me believe I could do the job at DDA which was a career defining moment!

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

Yes: Sheryl Sandberg - Facebook, Fiona Dawson – global president Mars Foods. They are incredibly successful leaders who on a global and personal level help women develop the confidence to succeed. They have all been highly successful and they continue to strive to achieve gender parity. Bronwen is in Fiona's team and it goes to show the power of the 'Shadow of the Leader'.

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

Be brave, take every opportunity and don't try and be perfect, some-times our drive for perfection can outweigh the good

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

Self- belief

**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?**

It's been a round a while but if you haven't read Sheryl Sandberg – 'Lean In' then I would highly recommend. I am currently listening to an audio book at the moment called the '5 Second Rule' By Mel Robbins, and it encourages you not to overthink (some-thing that I am guilty of) and act on your instincts. I have tried a few techniques and it works!

TED talks has loads of great stuff so worth taking a look. I am a huge fan of Caitlan Moran and love her autobiographical books– 'how to be a woman' and 'how to build a girl' which will make you laugh out loud as she talks through her trials and tribulations to becoming a successful journalist.