

My career in brief...

Name: Lesley Maltman

Job title: Proprietor

Industry: Events

Company: The Eventor

1. Please give a brief overview of your career history – where you started, how you progressed, the companies you have worked for etc

At school I thought I might like to work in PR but didn't know much about it so I applied for the CAM degree at UUJ. I did a year's placement at Ardmore Advertising where I was given responsibility for all production & purchasing including events. That placement led to part-time & then full-time employment & I stayed with them for 5 yrs before moving to AV Browne as Event Manager. I worked there for 2 years, running the Events Dept & then was head hunted in 2001 to start a NI operation for Dublin owned Ovation. I started the company from my kitchen table & built it up to a team of 15 at its largest, responsible for some of the most complex events ever delivered across the UK & Ireland. With a client base that extended as far afield as the US, I was also responsible for the delivery of conference, event & destination management projects across Europe in destinations including Lisbon, Berlin, Paris, Prague & Barcelona.

Ovation was taken over by global events & communications company MCI in June 2007 & in April 2009 I was made redundant. So, with no jobs about, I've set up on my own, trading as The Eventor. Offering business tourism consultancy services, conference & event management, association management & business development consultancy, my clients include The Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (I am their Executive Director), CO3, BMC Software, Disability Action, Newtownabbey Borough Council, ANIC and BT.

2. Have you always wanted to work within hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism and why? If not, how did you end up where you are now?

The story above kind of explains that. Event Management was only a small part of my job at Ardmore & I really didn't know anything about the opportunities in the industry before working there.

I love that part of my job & have been very involved in the industry throughout my career.

I was Chair of ABPCO for 2 years, was All-Ireland Chair of the Meetings Industry Association for 3 years, am a member of the Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE) and a member of the Business Visit & Events Partnership Committee.

I represented her sector on the board of Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau for 4 years until June 2009, have provided consultancy services for Northern Ireland Tourist Board & lectured on event management & communications at many academic institutes including the University of Ulster, South West Regional College & Newry College. My guest speaker portfolio nationally and internationally includes Leeds Metropolitan University, Poznan Convention Bureau, Tourism

Management Institute, International Confex & the upcoming 7th MICE Europe Congress.

3. What sort of qualifications and training have you had and what else would you like to do?

I have a BSc(Hons) Communication, Advertising & Marketing from UUJ but my conference & event management training comes from attending industry courses run by ABPCO & other UK associations.

I have just started an NVQ in Tour Guiding but am not quite sure this is right for me. At the time of my redundancy I looked about for something to do to enhance my CV but didn't feel there was much that suited someone at my level.

4. What are the top 5 activities you would typically carry out on a daily basis?

Meeting with clients to take briefs & discuss project plans

Sourcing & managing venues

Sourcing & managing other suppliers including design, print, AV, lighting, caterers, theming & decor, set, stage & backdrop.

Project design - coming up with the creative ideas & then how to implement them

Online marketing for events & ABPCO

'Having clients recognise that as a conference & event organiser my time & expertise is just as valuable as that of the PR Consultant'

5. What do you most enjoy about your job?

Seeing the events come to fruition after all the hard work! And working with lots of different types of people making the impossible possible.

6. What would you say is the biggest challenge you face on a daily basis?

Having clients recognise that as a conference & event organiser my time & expertise is just as valuable as that of the PR Consultant or Graphic Designer!

7. What would you say is your biggest achievement to date?

A year ago I would've said setting up & making a success of the Ovation/MCI operation in Northern Ireland. Now I think my biggest achievement is building a reputation & name for myself.

Working with people such as Meryl Streep would come a close second!

8. Who has been the greatest influence/role model in your career and why?

I don't really have one. I have met & worked with alot of people over the years who have influenced how I DON'T work. I think my passion for Northern Ireland and for the tourist industry comes from my Dad & all the daytrips he used to take us on as kids, discovering NI's hidden treasures.

9. Do you have a favourite tale or most memorable moment from your career? If so, please tell us about it!

Oh there are too many! One of my most embarrassing involves the televising of what looked like me patting Meryl Streep on the behind - I really wasn't!

10. What piece of advice would you offer someone who wants to work within our industries?

That you have to be realistic about the commitment involved. Hospitality is all about service delivery & you need to be passionate about what you're doing to enjoy it & to make sure your customers enjoy their experiences too.

11. Why would you encourage someone to work in our industry?

It really is one of the most important industries in NI at the moment & influences so many other industries alongside it.

The opportunities are great for travel if you want to take them & the industry is so diverse that you can move around to suit your skills.

Further information

For further information on career opportunities in the hotel or other hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industries, please visit www.uksp.co.uk.