

My career in brief...

Name: Caitriona Lennox
Job title: Regional Manager
Industry: Food Service Management
Company: Mount Charles Catering

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

I have been in catering since I graduated - loving every single moment. Starting as a Trainee Manager with Sutcliffe Catering in Scotland I progressed to Area Manager within 6 years before taking a 2 year career break. After my career break I decided to take an alternative role and joined the University Of Edinburgh as Food Production Manager. I remained in this position for 1.5 years before moving back home to Northern Ireland.

After 6 months caring for my then 1 year old, I then decided to return to work and was offered the position of Facilities Manager at the Northern Ireland Assembly with Mount Charles Catering, my current employer. I remained in this position for 8 years and when the contract expired I chose to remain with Mount Charles and was offered the very challenging position of Regional Manager for Mount Charles's Retail Division.

After 1.5 years in this position the opportunity to manage the Education and Healthcare Division came up and I was successfully appointed. This is my current position - Regional Manager of Education and Healthcare Division for Mount Charles.

'I have been in catering since I graduated - loving every single moment'

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?

Yes, ever since completing my GCSE's I was always interested in catering. I saw myself behind the scenes involved in food production but upon completing my HND was very passionate about the Front of House management role in catering. I am very fortunate to be in the position I am in.

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

I first went to Technical College and completed the 705 basic catering course. I then went to the Hotel Catering College and completed an OND followed by an HND in Hotel Tourism and Hospitality, completing my final year at University Of Ulster at Magee.

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

1. Operational Planning to achieve daily targets.
2. Staff / Man power planning to meet those targets.

3. Forward planning to meet tomorrows targets.
4. Client / Customer liaison - ensuring satisfaction with products and services
5. Financial management

5. What do you most enjoy about your job?

Daily challenges mean the job is never mundane or boring. Meeting lots of different people who are appreciative of the delivery of standards is great satisfaction. Being proud of what I do is enjoyment in itself.

'Daily challenges mean the job is never mundane or boring'

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

Man power planning and of course those financial targets.

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

Transforming the level of services at Parliament Buildings from the Northern Ireland Civil service to that which met the needs of the Northern Ireland Assembly Executive.

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

My current employer and Managing Director of Mount Charles - Trevor Annon. He is a very influential, approachable and hands on person who expects very high standards across all divisions of the company. He is very appreciative of the results his team deliver day on day and very proud of what the company has achieved in its 21 years. He is a wonderful leader and a great ambassador for the catering world.

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

Lots of tales when I was involved at Parliament Buildings but would not be permitted to publish them!! I have many many memorable moments esp when I met HM The Queen, Elton John, Pavarotti, USA Presiden Bill Clinton, Canadian Royal Family to name but a few. It was a pleasure to have been involved in the planning of many events and seeing the success of those events delivered in a most professional manner.

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

Hard work is expected but you need to be able to balance that with leisure time. Catering can be a 'round the clock' service but it is so important to be able to incorporate some leisure time and be fresh for new daily challenges.

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

Personal and job satisfaction would be the main one but also the fact that every day is different and very challenging.

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.