

My career in brief...

Name: Amy Langham
Job title: General Manager
Industry: Leisure Attractions
Company: SEA LIFE, Merlin Entertainments



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

I started working at 17 as a Christmas Temp for BHS in their Solihull branch, I worked for BHS for 4 years in several departments and stores while I completed my education. As part of my degree I completed a sandwich year at Essex County Council in their ICT department, an outsourcing agreement led me to transfer to Syntegra as a performance analyst during the final year of my university studies.

When I graduated in June 2003 I started at Merlin on the Management Trainee Programme at Brighton SEA LIFE centre. The programme was designed to give training in all the disciplines required to ultimately run your own centre. During my time at Brighton I took on roles of Unit Controller and Retail Manager.

May 2004 I moved to Birmingham SEA LIFE centre still as a trainee to learn how a bigger centre runs and to be the site duty manager. August 2004 I was promoted to Operations Manager at the York Dungeon during which time I learnt how to put into place all that I had learnt as a Trainee.

Dec 2005 I moved back to Birmingham SEA LIFE as Senior Operations Manager, during my time at Birmingham I was promoted to Attraction Manager (Designate) while awaiting for a site of my own to become available.

Jan 2008 seconded to Blackpool SEA LIFE as Attraction Manager (Designate), June 2008 promoted to Attraction Manager and then promoted again April 2009 to General Manager of the site.

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?

After working in a customer facing role at BHS to a desk based role at Essex County Council I realised that I wanted a career that combined the two which offered both the chance to work directly with customers and influence their experience but at the same time have a strategic input into the direction of the business as a whole

'the chance to work directly with customers and influence their experience'

A career within the tourism industry offers this with roles that are varied enough that no two days are the same.

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

I have a degree in Business Studies which offered a good broad knowledge of the different aspects of running businesses.

Since working for Merlin I have embarked on a number of different qualifications which have been tailored specifically to the running of attractions, they have been Certificate in Attraction Management, Diploma in Management Studies and recently I have completed a professional development course designed for Merlin called Platinum. Training and coaching are provided throughout the year in order to develop our skills in all aspects of the business.

A personal training goal for the future is to complete an MBA in business.

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

No two days tasks are the same but broadly the main focus everyday is on the quality of visitor experience, maximising marketing opportunities, ensuring all health and safety requirements are exceeded, maximising team satisfaction, ensuring EBITDA (earnings before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) is maximised.

'The most enjoyable part of the role is the variety, pace of change and the sense of achievement'

5. What do you most enjoy about your job?

The most enjoyable part of the role is the variety, pace of change and the sense of achievement that every day brings, when you know you have helped to make someone's day special.

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

The biggest challenge is to ensure that every visitor has the best experience they can possibly have and tailoring their visit to meet their needs so that it is a personal experience.

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

My biggest achievement to date is building a team that works as a team and is happy and motivated to achieve the best for Blackpool SEA LIFE and all of its visitors.

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

I have been influenced by everyone I have worked with as every experience helps to grow you as a person and helps to build your skills.

9. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

Due to the size of Merlin there are a number of different career paths I can now take which is incredibly exciting, which means I am not limited to anyone role for the future.

'Out of the ordinary experiences include staying overnight at the centre to baby sit a new octopus arrive'

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

It is difficult to pick just one memorable moment from the many experiences. Out of the ordinary experiences include; staying overnight at the centre to baby sit a new octopus arrival, the launch of a new bad taste bear, a 24 hour power cut and many more.

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

Be prepared to be flexible, move and travel in order to reach your personal goal.

12. What would you say are the essential person characteristics for your job e.g. enthusiastic, team worker, proactive etc?

'adaptable, flexible, passionate, customer focused'

A person who is adaptable, flexible, passionate, customer focused and most of all wants to have fun and enjoy their job.

Further information

For further information on career opportunities at SEA LIFE or other Merlin attractions, please visit www.merlincareers.com.

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

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