

Leading Women in Business

We love nothing more than celebrating women's achievements! This month we meet 11 inspiring entrepreneurs who are making a huge impact in the business world. They share their success stories and what it means to be their own boss

ADVERTORIAL

Emma Fitzpatrick 11 PR & Events

What inspired the idea for your business?

I set up 11PR & Events at the start of the pandemic after I had been made redundant from a job I had for 17 years. Despite my whole world turning upside down and the challenges I faced, it turned out to be the best thing to happen to me and it made way for some amazing opportunities. Being at home in lockdown also meant I had the time to really focus on my start-up without any distractions.

Can you describe your role?

As we are still a new business, just coming into our second year, a lot of what I do right now is planning as well as navigating the day-to-day administrative and accounting tasks. My role can vary, from catching up with our fabulous clients to brand plans where we look at new products that are coming from 2022 which are all very exciting and interesting. Social media is a huge part of any business and it is the same for us here. A lot of our time is spent online making connections.

You have worked with many big brands including St Tropez, Sanctuary Spa and Swedish Nutra Ireland, what is it that sets you apart?

I have a background in retail which gives me insight into both sides of the industry. When we work with our clients, we always take the customer into consideration so they have the best shopping experience with the brands. We also really try to never say no to a client! So, if they ask for something, we say yes and then figure out how we can make it happen later. As an agency we are constantly evolving and learning, and we're always striving to deliver results.

Working in PR can be very demanding, and clients can put a lot of responsibility in your hands, how do you manage your schedule?

I have recently been going to the gym for one-to-one PT sessions and it has been great for my overall wellbeing. By clearing that hour in the day for myself it has brought a lot more structure to my schedule. I have also learnt the art of saying no to certain things without feeling bad about it and it has helped hugely. I try to give enough time to prep between meetings so that I am 100% present instead of rushing trying to fit everything in.

What stands out as the greatest highlights in your business to date?

When I started 11PR & Events I was naturally very nervous. The fear of failure is always in the back of your head but deep down I felt that everything would be OK. My husband would always say to me "One day you will just be working and realise you have a business" – and it did happen! Around six or seven months in, I had just hired my second social media assistant, and I realised "Wow, I have a business" so actually realising I had a business was a huge highlight for me! Since then, I get the feeling nearly every day and it is great. I think we are so busy creating our business and nurturing it that we forget to kind of enjoy it! So, I do try to take time out and be thankful each day.

What is the most challenging aspect of working for yourself?

Starting a business can be scary at first and there will always be uncertainty. It takes a lot of hard work and planning because you don't know what your salary will be or if you will be able to take holidays. Figuring all that out and I

suppose planning your life around that uncertainty has been a challenge. However, it does all come together so I would say to anyone to just trust the process.

Can you name a businesswoman you admire and why?

There are so many wonderful female entrepreneurs in Ireland that it would be hard to pick just one. Women like Simone Rocha, Jennifer Rock, Mariana O'Brien, Orla Kiely, Suzanne Jackson and Pamela Lard are all people I admire greatly. I would look to them for inspiration and guidance daily and I enjoy seeing how they carry themselves and how they operate online. I think there is so much we can learn from everyone.

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PR
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PHOTO: JOE MONKS

Jennifer Haskins

Two's Company

As Ireland's leading dating agency, how long are you in business?

I've been in business now for 14 years and my clients range in age from 30 to 80 years of age. I have members from all walks of life including farmers, tradespeople, busy professionals and business owners. The one thing they all have in common is the desire to find "the one".

What sparked your interest in the science of matchmaking?

I have always been interested in people and what makes them tick. Having studied Psychology for many years including Counselling, Psychotherapy & Coaching I have an innate interest in the mind and human behaviour. We all have patterns – sometimes self-sabotaging patterns of behaviour that prevent us from achieving the life that we truly seek. I use my skills to help people become more aware and point them in the right direction to a happier and healthier future relationship.

What makes Two's Company different from other matchmaking services?

We are a unique service, there are no other agencies in Ireland and possibly the world operating in the same way. We offer our members choice and individually tailored memberships to suit their specific requirements.

Where do you see the future of modern dating apps?

I regularly hear feedback from people who are disillusioned with these platforms. They are so impersonal and tend to lead to bad dating behaviour. The general feedback I receive is that most guys are just looking for something casual and move on if they don't get an immediate response or the promise of sexual interaction. This is obviously a generalisation and there are some really genuine guys too, but online dating apps have led to some interesting behavioural patterns and none of them is positive.

As a matchmaking expert, what makes a strong and lasting relationship?

Having similar values are very important for a lasting relationship. It can also help if your partner is from a similar educational or socio-economic background.



As an entrepreneur, what motivates you personally?

I love my role as a matchmaker and derive a huge sense of satisfaction from helping people to find life partners. What other job can produce this level of success? We have helped create long-term relationships, marriages, and obviously, there have been many new babies born through these partnerships so we're actively helping to create the next generation.

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Dawn Finnegan

Golden Angel Tan

What pushed you to take the leap and create Golden Angel?

It has always been a dream of mine to own a beauty brand, especially tan. Lockdown hit in March 2020 and I had to close my make-up studio. It was such a scary time and I wasn't sure what the future would hold. I used that time to put my head down and make my dream a reality. I knew there was a gap in the market for a unique tanning product so I spent those months in lockdown one working behind the scenes, and that's how Golden Angel was born.

How do your products stand out in such a competitive industry?

I pride myself on my attention to detail. I wanted Golden Angel to be an affordable luxury for customers. It's an incredibly moisturising tan with ingredients like shea butter, sunflower seed oil and vitamin C. Golden Angel has a beautiful olive/golden undertone and each product comes wrapped with a white angel feather which customers love.

What's the most challenging part of running your own business?

It's a lot of work and it can be difficult to

balance your business and your personal life. Everything you see with my brand is all me – I do everything from marketing to packing orders to organising stock so it can be very busy. But I do love the hype of it all and I'm so grateful to be able to do it.

Your top beauty tip?

Exfoliate your skin once a week and moisturise as much as possible. Moisturising is key when it comes to self-tan. Also, drink plenty of water, get as much sleep as possible and never ever go to bed with your make-up on.

Are there any women in business who inspire you?

Jacqueline Gold, who is the CEO of Ann Summers, is an incredible success story. She was told that her business wouldn't succeed but she never gave up and proved to be resilient.

What's next for the brand?

I'm currently working on two more tanning products for Golden Angel which I hope to release this year. But my next big project is the launch of my second brand which is called Bombshell Beauty. This is my beauty brand which launches on 22.02.22 starting with a range of luxury strip lashes. It's been very busy but very exciting!

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Karan Burke



How did you get into the beauty/skin industry?

I studied beauty therapy 21 years ago at Crumlin College, Dublin and as soon as I qualified I took each and every opportunity that came my way. Taking all those early opportunities is how I have the experience and resilience today for the pace of the industry. I was accredited as a tutor through ITEC at 20 years of age. I enjoyed teaching two evenings a week on top of my full-time therapist job – and it didn't stop there. I used to rent a room in Walmer College & Holistic Centre where any hour I had spare I worked for myself. My passion and love still lie in the connection of a treatment. I adore all things holistic. I find nowadays it's hard to find therapists and skin specialists that get this element which is really important. I always remember being taught that people will forget what you said, forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel, and that's the difference with my team. Whilst they are experts at what they do, they have no ego and are connected to their clients and treatments.

What is your number one tip for maintaining healthy skin?

In my opinion, it's home care. You can be a VIP subscriber [MySkinCare offers membership treatment packages] and not follow your home care routine. It's like going to a personal trainer and eating fast food while trying to achieve a leaner physique. The results will never be the same without aftercare.

What is the most common mistake you see people making with skincare?

Following the advice of those not educated about skin. Every skin is different so I don't use what works for one of my colleagues, I take the time to invest in my skin and follow my skin specialist's advice. It will save you money long-term.

Product-wise, what skincare items should we splurge on?

Always look for active ingredients. We all understand marketing now from social media, but it's time people educated themselves and understood that any product you can buy over the counter, without a consultant to explain things, will most definitely not be as active as a product that is prescribed by a skin specialist (despite the box saying



1% retinol). It's all about marketing and people need to realise that active ingredients are expensive, so your supermarket brands will most certainly not be a highly potent product. If you're investing in skincare, spend your money well and book a skin consultation. Purchase products suitable for your skin concerns and you will evolve pretty quickly in terms of skin goals.

Which treatments are popular right now at MySkinCare?

SkinPen is very popular – it treats ageing skin, scarring, pigmentation issues and improves overall skin vitality. Everyone has been educating themselves over the last three to four years on microneedling and now SkinPen is the only FDA-approved microneedling device on the market. We are inundated with SkinPen treatments in both clinics.

What do you consider your greatest accomplishment as a skincare specialist?

My team are experts when it comes to skin; my forte is bringing that holistic

element to advancing skincare. We offer results along with relaxation. I trial and test all our treatments and I am constantly researching the markets further afield so we are always evolving as a clinic. My biggest achievement is definitely the spaces myself and my teams have created together. It's taken years but our clinics are magic.

What are the key beauty ingredients or skincare trends to look out for this year?

Key beauty trends for 2022 is continuing and maintaining your in-clinic treatments from home. We have seen a massive increase in sales of home beauty devices. People don't want to know just how to cleanse, use serum and moisturise anymore. They want to know how to get the most from their prescribed skincare. Did you know by using a derma roller with your serum every evening you will increase product penetration up to 70%? To see the full MySkincare @ Home range, please visit our website.

■ Web: www.myskincare.ie
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Caroline Downey

Carried Away PR & Events

You have worked on numerous award-winning campaigns for some of Ireland's leading companies in hospitality, fashion/beauty, finance and motoring, can you tell us what excites you about the public relations industry?

I love what I do so much as no day is the same, there is always some exciting new campaign to create and launch. Every client is different meaning every campaign is different making what we do so amazing.

What prompted you to set up Carried Away PR & Events?

I had been working in marketing and PR agencies but then I did a stint in a glossy magazine where I managed many exciting clients who were always asking for advice on PR and event ideas. The more I was offering advice the more I realised that it was that aspect I wanted to pursue. When I mentioned the idea to one of my advertisers, she replied, "I will be your first customer." That was it, Carried Away PR & Events

went from being a little consideration to a full-blown reality.

What has been your proudest achievement in business so far?

Still being in business six years on! Unfortunately, the event side of the business took a big hit in the last two years, however I know that 2022 is going to be massive for us. I already have calls coming in from businesses saying they want to hold an event.

Can you tell us the skills you need to work in PR?

You need to have excellent communication skills, both written and verbal. PR is about communicating your client's message to the media and their audiences. Another key skill is creativity. We need to be constantly developing campaigns that draw attention to a brand – building awareness with positive results.

Your top piece of advice for someone wanting a career in PR and marketing?

Building strong relationships with the media and networking is key to being successful in PR. Brands pay for our contacts and we spend years building our "little black book" so that we know who to contact when a client wants to secure that all-important interview with a media outlet.



You are based in Galway, have you any plans to expand your business nationwide?

Even though we are based in Galway we work with clients all over the country. Ireland is a community and no client is ever too far away. We are very excited to get back on the road in 2022.

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Denise Bennett White

Denise's Beauty & Skin Clinic

What sparked your love of beauty and the industry?

My late mum always loved make-up and skincare and when she brought me on my first trip to a beauty salon I was amazed that this could be my career. From my first day with Bronwyn Conroy Beauty School my passion grew. Twenty-five years' later I still love my job and the results I can achieve for people.

Is there a treatment or product you are consistently recommending to your clients and why?

I always recommend facials or the CACI non-surgical facelift as your skin is so important. The first thing you see when talking to people is their face and if you have healthy skin, you will always look good and feel confident. We all want to age gracefully and this unfortunately doesn't come without some effort.

What skincare tip do you swear by?

Always use SPF and skin supplements!

SPF is probably the most important cream you could put on and now we have to protect against blue rays from computer screens and phones as well as UV rays, as eight hours in front of a screen equates to 20 minutes in midday sun. Feeding the skin from within is so important which is why I swear by skin supplements. The skin is the largest organ of the body and the last to get nutrients from food.

Has the last two years changed or taught you anything about your business?

There's no doubt about it, the pandemic has been tough and it was hard to stay motivated at times. We changed how we conduct business – from launching our new website which has more than 1,100 products online, and moving our skin consultations and tutorials online.

What is the best piece of business advice you've ever received?

Trusting my own gut – it never fails me – and resilience, understanding the needs of my business during times of uncertainty.

What advice would you give to someone hoping to open their own



DENISES BEAUTY & SKIN CLINIC

salon and wanting to succeed in this business?

Don't give up! If your passion is strong enough, you'll succeed. It's been a tough 25 years and anyone who wants to achieve in life has to work hard for it, it doesn't come easy.

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Kerry Hanaphy

Kerry Hanaphy Ltd

Where did your passion for skincare originate?

In 2004, I was attending my nurses' training in London and I went to a beauty salon for a little treatment. While there, the girl had told me of a nurse coming in to do a treatment to get rid of fine lines, wrinkles and the ageing process. I was super intrigued and started to research all the new and different options on the market. This sparked my interest in aesthetics which at the time was an untouched market. When my eldest daughter was born with a facial birthmark, the idea of laser therapy interested me and made me go and get my BTEC qualification in skin which is rare in Ireland to have. All this together naturally progressed me into opening the business.

What's the most popular treatment in your clinic and why?

The obsession with perfect pouts has grown hugely in the last decade and is still showing no sign of slowing down. We still receive hundreds of requests each week from new patients looking to know more about our lip filler procedure – even during lockdown scenarios when face masks have become mandatory in public spaces. This and Profhilo has really taken off which is a hyaluronic acid injection into the skin to brighten and tighten your face, neck and body.

Your top tips to slow down the signs of ageing?

Start young, hydrate your skin with the likes of Mesotherapy, have a good skin regime, use factor 50, stop the sunbeds, limit your vices and drink loads of water. Once you get to your 30s, start to introduce anti-wrinkle injections and Profhilo and, occasionally, a chemical peel to get rid of the top skin layer and keep yourself fresh and bright.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced over the last two years?

I suppose every business has been affected by the pandemic with the uncertainty of the future and things constantly changing. But that can also make you stronger as a business and that's what it has done for us as we have grown exponentially in the last 18 months. People who were sitting at home on Zoom calls have been staring at themselves and are now in the market to invest in themselves, so



KERRY HANAPHY

when we reopened our doors fully we had a huge waiting list of clients to fit in. It does bring further challenges with our suppliers wanting upfront bills paid and things of that nature but we adapt and move forward.

The biggest lesson you've learned?

When you're young and on minimum wage, you think that money and success are everything. But what I've realised as I've gotten older and I've reached a nice level of success with a business is that although success is nice, the balance of work and life is just as important. What's the point in working so hard if you can't switch off and enjoy it? Being so busy you can miss out on important things with friends and family. Make sure you don't weigh one heavier than the other.

Your top three pieces of advice for women starting out in business?

Have the support you need. Don't feel that you can do everything yourself,



ask your friends to chip in if they can. If you're in the position to hire people to take the stress off you, do it! Make time to turn the phone off, pull away from your business, switch off, enjoy your downtime and be ready to go back to it after a short break. Lastly, networking and being nice to people is crucial. Having a great support network of genuine people around you is super important in any business or industry.

What do you want to achieve next?

Having just opened our third clinic with no financial backing, we are really happy with our progress as a business. We are very excited to keep up with what's next in the world of aesthetics and skincare and keep our clients feeling gorgeous all the way through 2022.

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Audrey Lehane

Azure Jewellery

When did you discover your love of jewellery?

From a young age myself and my sister had a fascination with my gran's jewellery box. She absolutely loved her accessories and we would paint her clip-on earrings with nail varnish to change the colour depending on her outfit. Buying new earrings for every outfit was not an option back then.

When did you start up Azure and where did you get the idea from?

I worked in Beamish and Crawford for eight years and while I was working in Paris with Beamish I took jewellery classes to help me make friends and help with the language. An opportunity for redundancy came up in the brewery and I knew that jewellery was something I wanted to explore. So in June 2004 that dream was realised and we opened in Carey's Lane, Cork

What is the best thing about your job?

No two days are the same, there is always something new happening. We are fortunate enough to meet so many different people and have had wonderful conversations over the 17 years. Catering for brides is also a great joy, this is the happiest time of their lives and it's so wonderful for us to share in their experiences.

What does a typical day look like for you as a jewellery designer?

A walk to the school followed by a walk with my lovely springer, Alfie. I arrive at the shop at around 10am where I tackle online requests and emails first. Then I liaise with my jewellery maker Sinéad on what items need to be made for the week. I would be quite busy with bridal appointments daily. We are also delighted to supply our handmade jewellery to some great Irish businesses so that always keeps us busy.

You specialise in handmade jewellery, bridal jewellery and bridal hair accessories, where do you find inspiration?

As our bridal jewellery and hair accessories are mainly bespoke we draw huge inspiration from our brides and, of course, the wedding dress. Jewellery and accessories complete the look and make a wedding dress belong to the bride. The style, material and fit of the dress tell me a huge amount about the personality of the bride and we cater to that. Every bride wants to dazzle on her big day and well made



accessories can bring the look to the next level. I follow bridal trends very closely and create pieces to reflect this.

What are your favourite materials to use?

I absolutely love working with pearls, crystals and gemstones. Pearls are classic and timeless yet there is so much you can do with them. I love the diversity of sizes and colours that we can use. As Jackie Kennedy once said, "Pearls are always appropriate."

What is your favourite, most treasured piece of jewellery?

I have a gorgeous Christian Dior brooch that was left to me when my mum passed away. I never wear it as I'm afraid I'll lose it. But I adore it.

How do you want women to feel when wearing your jewellery?

I hope that anyone who has purchased a piece from our collection feels beautiful wearing it. Every piece of jewellery gifted or otherwise carries a story. Jewellery is a form of self expression or a symbol of love. I am so grateful to be a part of that story.

If you could see anyone wear your pieces, who would it be?

I love being out and about in Cork and seeing people wearing our jewellery. But if I had to pick one, it would have to be Oprah Winfrey – I love everything she stands for.

■ Web: www.azurejewellery.ie

Vahida Gogic Safura

As the founder of three clothing stores in Tralee, Enniscorthy and Wicklow, can you tell us what inspired you to get into the retail field?

I always had a love for fashion, I did fashion and textile design and fashion buying and merchandising in college. And while I did the courses I worked part-time for Topshop/Topman. I absolutely loved every aspect of fashion retail, so it was always one of my ambitions to have my own brand and my own stores.

How did you come up with the name of your brand?

I named the shop after my grandmother, Safura, the most inspirational woman that I have ever met. She lived with us and her motto was that women should look after themselves, for themselves. She always said if you look good, you feel good so I took her words and tried to bring that to life by helping women choose beautiful clothing. I also named my daughter Safura and hope to pass my grandmother's wisdom, values and style to her generation.

What's the best part about your job?

I am passionate about what I do and I love making women feel confident about what they're wearing. It's a privilege to have the opportunity to meet so many incredible women through work, and I adore seeing them get so excited about new styles that arrive in our stores and online. It gives me great satisfaction when our collections get such a good reaction, too. My other passion is my three girls. I want to be the best role model for them growing up. I want them to know that if you work hard and believe in yourself you can achieve anything in life, it might take a bit of time but it will eventually happen. I think we as women need to lead by example for the next generation.

And the most challenging part?

Trying to balance family life and work can be a challenge. I have young children and it can get very hectic at times when you're trying to run a business at the same time as being Mam at home. Keeping your relationship alive by having date nights whenever you get a chance is important too. Thankfully, we are blessed with two amazing sets of grandparents who support us and give us time to spend as a couple.

Your top advice for someone who wants to work in fashion?

I would advise them to try a multitude of roles within the retail sector, from a sales assistant role to merchandising, supervisory and store management roles. We have so many members of our team who started off at entry-level positions and worked their way right up to supervisor, store manager and area manager roles. So it's a definite must to try all areas in the retail field and see what you enjoy the most. When you enjoy what you do it doesn't feel like work so, yes, just go for it, work hard and bring your passion.

What's your personal style?

It changes from day to evening. During the day I love being edgy and trendy, and when it comes to nighttime my style is more classy, feminine and chic.

Who does Safura cater for in terms of shoppers?

Our main customer is a fashion-conscious woman who wants to dress well, keep on-trend yet look and feel good at the same time. Our customer profile is very vast, it starts from clients in their early 20s and beyond. Our goal for 2022 is to do extended sizes for the curvy girl which we've already been working on and are super excited about it.

What are your best-selling products?

I have always had a huge interest and love for dresses. One of the main reasons we place so much emphasis on our dresses is because we always have a great response to them. Our highest selling category was our own production of knitwear last season and the reaction that we got based on the small details that we added was fantastic. Our SS22 tops are starting to land and we're really excited to see our customer reaction to these styles.

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SAFURA.



Claire Dilworth Cinderella's Closet

If you had to give one piece of advice to another store owner, what would it be?

As a boutique owner you will play many roles every day, so you need to learn to wear different hats and wear them well. We all know that the soul of any business is the team. I am truly blessed with mine, they're an incredible bunch and our customers see it first-hand.

What is the best part of your job?

I love what I do because everyone shares the same vision. Being my own boss, I love that I have flexibility in my schedule. Even though I work a lot, I can arrange my time around the school pick-up and having fun with my kids. To see the faces of a bride or a little Communion girl when they find their perfect dress brings such joy – their happiness and excitement are just contagious. Nothing is better than a true smile and when you know that smile is because of you, it makes everything worthwhile. Brightening up a person's day is priceless.

What are the top three things to look for in the perfect wedding dress?

When it comes to true love, it's all in the details. So when choosing your dress, you need to choose luxurious fabrics, a fabulous fit and exquisite embellishments.

Can you tell us about some of the designers you stock and why you chose them for your brides?

Cinderella's Closet is the destination for the modern bride seeking their ultimate wedding gown since 2010. Our collections reflect individuality, grace, timeless elegance and quality chosen from the finest designers. Each designer has his or her own style and identity that ensures a diverse choice. The collections include structured strapless gowns, fluid delicate lines and chic tailored classics. All are simply beautiful. Here are just a few of our designers:

Allure Bridals Disney Fairy Tale Weddings Collection:

Designed with happily ever after in mind, Allure Bridals have created romance and magic turning fairytales into reality for brides. This amazing collection is made up of nine fantasy gowns highlighting a wide variety of timeless bridal silhouettes.

Sophia Tolli:

A fusion of modern romance and timeless elegance, the Sophia Tolli Australia collection is a celebration of diversity, femininity and individuality. With the vision to make every bride feel confident, empowered and beautiful on their special day, every Sophia Tolli gown is handcrafted with love and designed to be remembered forever.

Sottero & Midgley by Maggie Sottero:

Each season, this designer offers cutting-edge styles to brides with elegant and discerning tastes. She has cast all the features of a romantic, eminent film for her latest collection inspiration – soft square necklines, intriguing 3D elements, bombshell lace, fanciful bows, alluring exposed boning, themes of maximalism, and unique elements to match the decadence of your love. An ode to artistic periods throughout history, these new styles culminate a story of grand escapades.

Martin Thornburg:

Designer Martin Thornburg believes that a truly magnificent wedding dress is all about shape, fit and construction. His premiere solo collection is as diversified and unique as the brides themselves. An assortment of fashionable bridal gowns ranging from traditional ball gowns to modern wedding dresses, this collection offers today's stylish brides high quality fabrics, hand-beaded Swarovski crystals, and impeccable fit at an affordable price.

What made you get into the bridal industry?

The glitz, the glamour and the love! The wedding industry has so much goodness to offer those who choose it as their professional path. It allows me to explore my creative side too. I first started out in a box room in my home renting dresses, but through passion, hard work and the love for what I do, I now have a 3,000sq.ft luxurious boutique with three private consultation suites. I am very thankful for this and to our staff and customers.

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Valerie Roe Valerie Roe PR

As the founder of a small agency that delivers big business results, what do you love most about your job?

I would have to say the relationships I've built with my clients and with colleagues in the industry. I am discerning when it comes to working with brands or people. I don't take on every client that comes my way. I will only work with people and brands that I genuinely like and believe in. The result of that is a drive to go above and beyond for my clients because I truly want to help make their businesses a success. I do work all hours of the day – that's just my nature! I can just come alive at 2am, motivated to work, and equally be at my desk at 8am, but I love it. It probably stems from my years working at Lillie's Bordello [an iconic Dublin nightclub which closed in 2019] – I would be in the office during the day and in the club that night. And in PR, when you love what your clients do, you just become passionate about bringing that to the attention of others. I've always surrounded myself with fantastic people, and I've made some wonderful friendships during my career as a result.

How did you get your start in the industry?

Looking back at all my life's experiences, a career in PR was the perfect fit for me. Working in Lillie's Bordello, doing all of the PR in-house, organising events, looking after celebrities and building the club's international reputation; writing a regular social column for the *Sunday Tribune*; and also being in the spotlight myself when I represented Ireland at Miss Universe, I've experienced publicity on all sides at one time or another. I'm naturally a people person, I have a strong work ethic, and I know every aspect that's involved in building a brand. The only thing I needed then was the confidence to just go out on my own and set up a business for myself, and I am so glad I did.

What are the main skills you need to work in PR?

An excellent work ethic, good people skills, and you need a solid understanding of the media landscape you're working within. You also need to be passionate about the brands you align yourself with, and really understand their businesses and ethos. And always follow your instincts.

What has been your proudest



PHOTO: JAVENITA

VR VALERIE ROE PR

achievement in business so far?

Seeing my own business flourish and my hard work pay off has been a massive career boost for me personally. Striking out on one's own is always a risk, but for me, it's been worth it. This business has evolved so much, too, through recessions and especially the last two years as we've navigated our way through the pandemic. We've managed to come up with fresh ideas and develop new ways of working as things unfolded, and I'm really amazed at what we've achieved through it all.

What do you look for when considering taking on a new client?

When I first meet with a potential client, I want to see they have a real passion for what they do and a firm understanding of their business and where it's going. Strong values, too, are great to see, whether they want to improve their sustainability practices, support a worthy cause or simply want

to create a brilliant working environment for their team. It's all about getting to the heart of who they are – that really motivates me to do what I do best.

What businesswomen do you admire most?

I love what Pat McGrath and Charlotte Tilbury have done for beauty – they've both created unique brands with their own individual identity following from their experiences as make-up artists. I am enormously lucky to work with so many inspiring businesswomen. I admire their work and creativity as well as the resilience they display on a daily basis.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

Who really knows where any of us will be a decade from now? When I started out in my career, that was a question many of us had some sort of answer to, but the landscape changes so rapidly nowadays and it's only bound to speed up even further, so I've learned to stop trying to predict the future or plan too far ahead.

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