

“Creative Talk”

With Suzanne McNamara
PR specialist and head of Convergence Auckland.

Who are you? - How would you describe yourself?

Down to earth PR woman and business woman, dedicated to my clients' reputations and success.

What do you love about your job?

It's so varied. As a consultant I can work on anything from a fun account like the Splore Festival, to corporate clients that could need a media issue managed for them or a complex piece of writing done. I also love our team – they're bloody fantastic.

What keeps you sane and on top of your game?

I have just completed a six week meditation course. I seem to have a lot more clarity as a result. I also work out a minimum 3 times a week (try to make it 5 but life gets in the way sometimes) And of course I drink chardonnay and hang out with friends.

What would you say your strengths and your weaknesses are?

Knowing that I don't know everything is a good place to start with strengths – I like to bring in expertise better than my own when needed. I'm an optimist about almost everything – so I'm generally cheerful. Weaknesses – I'm a direct communicator and that's not everyone's cup of tea but I subscribe to telling clients what they need to hear instead of what they want to hear.

What inspires you?

It's a cliché but I'd have to say nature. I love to ski (hard) and tramp in mountains. I've just got new skis this season so I am praying to the snow gods for a great season. This morning I was out in Western Park in Ponsonby with a bunch of mates running up those nasty hills and I commented on how beautiful the park looked (at 7am). Our trainer said it's a messy time of year because of all the leaves – she's a Virgo so go figure – I just thought winter can be beautiful.

Technology is constantly evolving and upgrading, and there is always something bigger (or smaller) and better, how do you keep up?!

I used to work in television gathering news in the days of big old heavy cameras to lug around, now it's so much easier with the digital revolution. Use it or lose it – I'm addicted to my iphone and Mac book air like most people and I'm a regular user of social channels. It's important to keep pace but when you're running a business there is only so many hours in a day. That's when I fall back on experts – hence our dedicated social media guru Kat Lee on our team.

What would be your PR words of wisdom?

Really understand the business your client is in so you can add value. I don't consider myself one of those fluffy PR people that just likes to organise events and be on the social pages. I like to be in the room at the top table talking to the Chief Executive – and you need to know your stuff when you're at that level and sometimes it's not about getting into the media, it's about avoiding it.



Tell us about your favourite or most memorable project you have worked on so far and why?

I won a PRINZ award (judged by my peers) for the work I did on Splore Festival in 2010. My old flat mate and good friend Amanda Wright is the Splore Festival director and we bumped into each other in 2006 right when I had left full time employment at TVNZ. Splore was fairly underground in those days still and they had never had an expert running their marketing, sponsorship and PR portfolio – so we have worked hard with the Splore team to build it up to be a sell out festival. It's lots of fun and a fantastic team of passionate Splorites who work on it. This year early birds sold out in 30 hours – so that's a testament to all the hard work from all of us over the years to make it the best boutique festival in the world!

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If you hadn't become a PR specialist, what would you be doing now?

Probably writing. I applied for journalism school 3 times and got turned down – I think because I didn't know the politicians which was a key question in the entry exams. I just wasn't interested in politics in my 20's in the same way I am now. I'd still like to write that novel one day.

Are you where you thought you would be 5 years ago? - Where do you want to be in 5 years?

Probably not if I was to be really honest. It's taken a long time to build as I was also wanted to spend time being a MUM and I have a husband that travels a lot so a lot of the day to day responsibility falls on me – but it's the most important job to bring up your kids so I wouldn't change that for the world. I'm feeling on the tipping point now though – and in 5 years I'd like to have a bigger business with an even more excellent reputation.

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“Creative Talk - it's all about your say”