

Legacy

CREATING A CAREER LEGACY

Last week, a business that I founded seven years ago shut up shop. It was the Asian hub for a UK-headquartered company and, even though I had resigned in 2015, because I was ready to put my own name on a business, and the appeal of having an opportunity to create an Asia-centric approach to Corporate Affairs/Comms recruiting spurred me on, the news brought back memories. Particularly of those early days when, as a team of one, armed with a laptop and a blank sheet of paper, I set out to establish a business from scratch.

My 'big break' came after ten weeks when an organisation signed me up to build their entire communications function. That one piece of business 'kept the lights on', as they say, and gave the UK investors confidence that this was a viable market.

For four & a half years, I poured my heart and soul into its business development. I was responsible for building its client base and hiring a dream team to support those efforts. And what a team the original group was: Kellie Brown, Jane de Podesta, Tom Morgan-Harris and Yating Wang, with Libby Trace and Daniela Mackay-Cruise in Singapore.

Its closure has caused me to reflect on the work that we did and the contributions we made over those years. Does its closure negate our efforts? Do our contributions cease to exist? What is a career legacy?

This type of thinking is usually reserved for company CEOs but, increasingly, people are searching for a purpose in their working environment. It used to be people hitting their 50s who started to reflect on their careers, but millennials and boomers are starting out on their working lives by seriously considering the impact that they want to make. Career legacy workshops can be powerful in helping employees to frame these thoughts more coherently, by asking questions such as 'What type of contribution would you like to make?' or 'How would you like to be remembered by colleagues?' These discussions can help to inspire behaviours and culture across a business.

I recently met a 59 year old, who had moved lock, stock and barrel across the world for a new role. When I asked why, she replied 'because I wanted a different career legacy'. In an industry such as PR, where professionals take such linear paths, I found this move quite inspiring.

Of course, there is a real difference between being reckless or being brave. When considering 'legacy', I'd urge on the side of brave. I should know. I resigned at eight months pregnant, to 'back myself' by launching my own business - Andrews Partnership.

Obviously, the older we get, the harder it is to 'be brave' - as the realities of our personal responsibilities kick in — school fees, housing costs and family life. In those circumstances, sticking with the status quo can seem the safest option. And yet - if you still hanker to 'break out' - I would say: go for it. I am the biggest advocate for trying something new because there is truly nothing more satisfying than believing in yourself.

As one senior candidate told me: 'Every time you move roles, you bring everything with you. That's the great thing about a career. It builds. The slate doesn't wipe clean with each move; it just gets richer and more detailed. So the idea of change should never stop you. It should actually drive you on.'

So the fact that my first business in Asia is no more, does not detract from the experiences I gained during that period of development. Or impact on my career legacy. If anything, it has helped shape and underpin the successful business that I run today.



KATRINA ANDREWS

Established Andrews Partnership, a specialist firm focusing on corporate affairs and investor relations recruitment after four years as a board director at VMA, where she founded VMA Group Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa with the creation of its Hong Kong, Singapore and Johannesburg offices. In 2015, Katrina became the first recruitment professional ever-listed in PRWeek's global Power Book 500. Previously, Katrina spent seven years as APAC managing director at Melcrum, working with leaders and teams around the globe to build skills and know-how in internal communication.