

Edinburgh Reporter Chats #2

Fiona Campbell

✘ Fiona Campbell is a young woman with her roots firmly in Edinburgh. She lives in the capital and runs her furniture business from here too.

Why are you working in Edinburgh

I was born and brought up in Edinburgh and my parents now live in North Berwick. I have actually lived away – a year in Australia, and I lived in Dundee and also Aberdeen. It is where I started my business when I was in 21. I have built up a clientele here and if I moved it would be like starting over really. I absolutely love Edinburgh.

Do you think it is the best place to be?

Yes definitely in Scotland this is the place to be. Everyone designing furniture in Edinburgh is never short of work. It is much cheaper than living and working in London but you still have the centre of the arts world feeling. For small businesses it is a good place to be.

Person of major influence in your career?

On a one to one basis it is Anselm Fraser who runs a furniture school in Gifford. He is so passionate about furniture and design. I went to the school with no experience whatsoever and he is so passionate it rubs off on all the students. He would be the one person who I would say has had the most influence. He is not like a normal lecturer or teacher – but in a good way!

What would make a huge difference to your business now?

My business is in a state of change at the moment. I am doing more design work at the moment. I have recently brought out a

range of trays for catering, so I have to learn sales skills now. I have not had to do any sales at all in the past. I have brought out the range of champagne trays which I am selling myself by going round stores to publicise them.

✘ I am also consulting with the Chamber of Commerce to see what I can get from them – things like mentoring etc. The trays are selling really well on their own without me doing too much, but I have decided to set some time aside to promote them for a time.

I make everything apart from the perspex champagne trays. If it is a big job then I take on casual labour. For instance, I had to make 22 bunk beds and some single beds for Stornoway and I employed a couple of people in the workshop for about six months to help me with that. I also have a couple of girls in London who may become sales people for me for the champagne trays. The champagne trays are being sold in Vino, the latest chain of wine shops and they are being sold by Miriam Fogarty who has an online store called [Gulp](#) as well as a shop in North Berwick.

What do you do to keep your work/life balance?

I love to get out to the Pentlands. On Sundays I like to go for a big walk in the Pentlands. I am a big fan of hill-walking and sometimes manage to get up north. I like skiing in Scotland and do that in the winter as much as possible. I like theatre, cinema and all the things I can access in the centre of the city. Oh and shopping! I also have good mates in Edinburgh and go out with them too.

There is always more that can be done. I went through Princes Trust when I first started up and they were great. Although I did not go in for any of their awards, I did show some of my work at a huge exhibition that they organised for people starting up in new businesses. Networking events were good when I first started to swop ideas with other people and get

advice from people who were just a little further ahead than me. I did basic book-keeping and marketing courses with them too which was really useful.

But The Chamber of Commerce have lots of experience and I am consulting them to see what is available to me now. I have a new branch of my business now, and need a different kind of help at the moment.

What do you do about networking now?

The Young Professionals Networking Event takes place on the first Thursday of each month and I have just started going to that. It is really good for meeting younger people in business and I will definitely be going back to that. But it is just speaking to everyone I meet about my business as much as possible! Online networking I am now into Twitter and blogging. I find that my [website](#) works really well to get new business. I got some help to set up my new website which I am pretty pleased with. I work hard at keeping my blog up to date. I have only been blogging for the last year and I have met a few people through that who have asked me to exhibit my furniture in different places.

So do you think you're there yet?

I feel that I am teetering on the edge. The furniture has always been a good steady business. Anselm Fraser always told us that you should concentrate on one product or one style and that has stuck in my mind. That is why I am concentrating so much on the trays. They are now selling really well and I feel they are just taking off.