

# Edinburgh Reporter chats with Cath Strachan



WHO ARE YOU AND WHERE DID YOU COME FROM

Now locally based, I am originally from Aberdeen, where I started working life as a nurse. I then moved into the commercial sector, with a role in pharmaceutical sales – this is where my interest in search and selection and the importance of effective recruitment began.

I worked with leading recruitment consultancies ASA International, Austin Knight and Adderley Featherstone, before starting my own company MSK Search Consultancy in 2000. In the last twenty five years, I have sourced senior personnel for some of Edinburgh's biggest and best known companies. I have also grown MSK Search into an international business – we work with clients in the US, Africa, Scandinavia, Middle East and Singapore, as well as in the UK.

WHAT IS THE BUSINESS BOOK YOU RECOMMEND THAT EVERYONE SHOULD READ

I would recommend reading 'Success Through A Positive Mental Attitude' by Napoleon Hill. I firmly believe that adopting a positive frame of mind is crucial to achieving your goals.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE YOUR BUSINESS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

My main strengths are my many years of experience and my focus on delivering a high quality, cost-effective service. I also find that clients like that we offer a 'transparent' service – we de-mystify the search process and simply find the right people, as quickly as possible.

It is not entirely a weakness, but I am very dedicated to my

job and sometimes do not see as much of my family as I would like.

WHAT WAS THE DEFINING MOMENT ON YOUR CAREER PATH THAT HAS GOT YOU WHERE YOU ARE NOW

I was very fortunate to receive great advice from an established recruiter when I was just starting out in the search sector. Their encouragement helped confirm for me that I was making the right move.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR SPARE TIME?

I enjoy spending time with my partner, family and walking our dog, a lovely black Labrador called Zoe. I am also a keen gardener and grow my own vegetables.

DO YOU THINK YOU ACHIEVE A GOOD WORK/LIFE BALANCE

I definitely try to achieve a good work/life balance, as I believe it is extremely important.

WHAT MAKES EDINBURGH THE BEST LOCATION FOR YOU TO LIVE AND/OR WORK IN

One of the pleasures of working in Edinburgh is that it is a very beautiful city. I also like that it has a substantial business sector and lots of great arts and culture activities on offer.

WHAT IS YOUR SPECIAL AREA OF EDINBURGH OR SPECIAL PLACE IN EDINBURGH AND WHY

I love the shopping in Edinburgh, especially Harvey Nichols. While I tend not to have a lot of spare time, if I am at a meeting nearby, it is always a pleasure to drop in for a quick browse afterwards.

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER THE PINNACLE OF YOUR CAREER

Our tenth anniversary in business, two years ago, was a

particularly exciting time. We had exceeded all our targets, built a strong business, with a solid client base and the outlook was extremely positive. I thought we had attained all of our goals, but am delighted to report that we have since continued to increase turnover and expand into more countries around the world.

IF YOU HAVE A MENTOR, TELL US WHO THAT IS AND ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP

I do not have a mentor as such, but I find that if you keep an open mind, you will learn from everyone you meet.

WHICH NETWORKING GROUPS IN EDINBURGH HAVE YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY USEFUL

I have not yet attended any networking groups in Edinburgh, but I plan to during 2013. I have also built a substantial network of contacts over the years, from meeting hundreds of business owners and senior personnel.

WHO ARE YOUR BUSINESS HEROES

I admire business owners who stick to their core values and maintain a high standard of service.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE NEXT YEAR

We have diversified into a number of new sectors over the last year and the plan is to continue to continue this course of action, as it has proved to be very successful for us.

DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY FOR US

I usually start work at 7am, after walking Zoe. Often I am travelling, either to client meetings with my Edinburgh clients, or to appointments with clients in London or Aberdeen, where we have a significant amount of projects underway. My role also involves overseas travel, especially to Scandinavia and Singapore, where demand is growing for senior

oil and gas personnel. A large proportion of my time is spent in pre-screening candidates for short-lists or sitting on interview panels.

Otherwise, I am at my desk, talking to potential candidates, reviewing CVs and briefing my researchers. No two days are the same.

#### BEST JOB ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED

Keep doing whatever it is that makes you successful – it is obviously working. But always be prepared to make any changes required, to maintain your success.