

Business Spotlight – Fergusson Law



Janice Fergusson runs a legal practice called [Fergusson Law](#) based in Edinburgh. She attended Edinburgh University to study both for her law degree and her post graduate Diploma in Legal Practice and now works there part time as a tutor. But now she has set up her own practice in the city.

Janice has qualifications from the Association of Taxation Technicians in personal taxation, business taxation, accountancy, and the taxation of trusts and estates. She is also qualified as a solicitor in England and Wales.

She works part time at the University of Edinburgh, tutoring on the Private Client course in the post graduate Diploma in Legal Practice.

Before becoming a lawyer, Janice worked for many years as an Inspector with the Health and Safety Executive, covering a range of industries but with particular experience of the food and drink industries, petro-chemical plants, other major hazard industries, and the offshore oil industry. She has a post graduate Diploma in Safety and Occupational Hygiene from the University of Aston in Birmingham, and is a member of the Health and Safety Lawyers Association.

Janice also has a degree in Modern Languages from St Andrews University. She speaks French and German, and has lived in both countries.

We asked her a few questions to find out who she really is.

Who are you, and where did you come from?

I am a Fifer, but have lived most of my life in Edinburgh, with the exception of very happy periods working in France, Aberdeen and London, and a less successful, short lived foray to Liverpool.

What is the business book you recommend that everyone should read?

I have never got beyond the first chapter of any business book I have picked up, with the exception of a hilarious paperback (now sadly out of print) on how not to succeed at job interviews.

What do you think are your business strengths and weaknesses?

My main business strength is that I am always willing to give everything a go, and once I get started on something I do my best to be as effective and efficient as possible. That is also my main weakness, though, as I find it very difficult to say no.

What was the defining moment on your career path that has got you where you are now?

There have been two defining moments in my career: the first when I gave up my job in the civil service to study law, the second several months ago when I set up my own law firm as a sole practitioner. In both cases, the deciding factor was that I realised I would always regret it if I didn't.

How do you spend your spare time?

I am a runner and orienteer, so most week-ends will find me somewhere out of doors getting hot sweaty and covered in mud. When the weather is bad I bake cakes. I also like exercising my brain: I have just qualified as a Tax Technician, though I keep very quiet about that at dinner parties.

Do you think you achieve a good work/life balance?

I have always believed that no-one ever wishes on their deathbed that they had spent more time at work. I enjoy my work, but my family, friends and hobbies are more important.

What makes Edinburgh the best location for you to live and/or work?

Edinburgh is such a beautiful city I could never envisage settling anywhere else. There are also very few cities in the world where it is possible to live in a quiet residential street within 25 minutes walk of the centre of town.

What is your special place in Edinburgh?

My favourite place in Edinburgh is the top of Arthur's Seat on a clear day. The views are stupendous.

What would you consider the pinnacle of your career?

Hopefully my career is still on the way up!

If you have a mentor then could you tell us who that is and about your relationship.

My friend Brian is my mentor. He is great at finding a way to turn my ideas into reality. I wouldn't have been able to set up my own business without his help and encouragement.

Which networking groups in Edinburgh have you found particularly useful?

I'm a beginner at networking, but I've been to a few seminars at Business Gateway, which have been very useful, as well as enjoyable.

Who are your business heroes?

My business hero is probably Richard Branson, who still looks as though he enjoys life despite being so successful.

What are your business goals for the next year?

My goal for the next year is to attract lots of clients and start making a profit. I also have a friend who is interested in joining me, if I can get enough work to keep us both busy, and that would be a huge plus as it can be lonely working on your own.

Describe your typical day for us.

My first priority when I get into work is coffee! I'm not a morning person and find it hard to get going. Before finishing work each day, I write a list of the jobs I intend to do the following day, and after I have dealt with post, e-mails and voicemail, I get started on those.

My work is a mixture of drafting legal documents, writing letters, making phone calls and writing e-mails. I have meetings with clients most days, and like to keep up with my main contacts by meeting them for lunch or coffee.

As I am still in the early stages of establishing my law firm, I also aim to spend at least an hour a day doing something to promote my services.

Best job advice you ever received?

The best job advice I have ever received was only to take on work I knew I would enjoy and find interesting, as it is impossible to succeed at something you find boring.

Your plan of attack for the next 12 months?

My plan of attack? Networking, networking, networking . . .

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