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Life after brand management: Emma McDermott



In this careers feature, [Liz Foster](#) asks the question, with the number of corporate marketing roles shrinking as you climb the ladder, where do all the brand managers go?

Who?

Emma McDermott

When and where did you work in marketing?

Got my first paid marketing job in 1990, straight out of uni; working at the student union publicity office. Lots of fun, beer, long hours, and great bands. Relocated to Sydney in 1993 and began what would become a long stint in professional services marketing. First for Corrs Chambers Westgarth and then for Arthur Andersen, EDS and Thomson Legal & Regulatory, (now Thomson Reuters).

Highest marketing level reached?

Marketing manager, Thomson Legal & Regulatory.

What do you do now?

I run a business called My Personal Stylist, providing personal brand advice and styling, plus corporate image management and etiquette. Funnily enough, a large percentage of my client base now is women 35+ who've taken time out from the corporate sector to have children and are wanting to redefine their own brand.

Did you choose your path or did it choose you?

I chose my marketing career path, but after my third retrenchment and an increasing feeling that the ladder I had climbed was 'against the wrong wall', I decided that perhaps another more fulfilling career path was a road less travelled. I decided to pursue my true passion... as an image 'agent provocateur', illuminating possibility and provoking change.

What's the most important skill that you've taken from your marketing days?

A firm understanding of the power of brand equity and the importance of authenticity. In addition I am now able to apply all of my brand and marketing knowledge to my own business and so limit the need for external marketing support.

If you had your time again, would you climb the corporate marketing ladder?

Yes, definitely. It has been an enormously beneficial training ground for my new life as an entrepreneur.

What were the best and worst parts of your role as BM?

WORST: The long hours, lack of recognition, and perceived inability to really make a difference.

BEST: The travel – I got to work in New Zealand, US, Hong Kong and to attend one of the world's biggest IT trade shows, COMDEX in Las Vegas. Also, the opportunity to develop my skills and expertise through very good workplace training programs. This is invaluable to me now.

What career tips would you offer an aspirant or current BM?

Keep your eyes on the prize. Know what you want to achieve. Dress for the role you aspire to, and in the words of marketing guru Seth Godin, "become indispensable".

Now that you've left the world of brand management, are you satisfied with your current role? If not, what are your future career aspirations?

I love, love, love my current role. I would not trade the old corporate marketing days for anything. Mind you, paid annual leave and sick leave would be nice but on the whole, the joys of being a business owner far outweigh any temporary challenges I might experience. Plus I get to walk my talk and make a real difference.

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