



“Be willing to learn, flexible and don’t be afraid to ask questions”

Introduction

Rachel Jones is one of Cornwall’s successful serial entrepreneurs and is CEO of Fit ‘N’ Fun Kids Ltd. She is passionate about business and in particular supporting young people in business.



Image: **Rachel Jones**, CEO – Fit ‘N’ Fun Kids

How did you get started in your career?

I started my business as a sole trader, delivering physical activities to under five year olds with parents as a mobile activity. As most of my families were in a Sure Start area, I was asked to support the Sure Start initiative with Consultation Days providing childcare and activities. Having created Support Crèches with qualified Practitioners, I soon realised the value of providing high quality childcare services for local families and therefore went on to create the Fit ‘N’ Fun Kids Childcare organisation.

This organisation now provides childcare and associated services throughout Cornwall with a team of just over approximately 50 members of staff.

Can you outline a typical work day?

Personally, as CEO most of my time is spent supporting the organisation strategically, whilst also being able to manage my other businesses, Leading Women UK, Enterprise Foundation South West and attending meetings as a Board member of several organisations.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I find my job very rewarding. As a business owner I have the flexibility to work to my own time (despite this often exceeding 70hrs per week) but managing my own time and fitting this around my responsibilities and having time for my family is a personal priority. All my businesses provide a service and benefit the future for families, young people and business growth for Cornwall & Isles of Silly. I love being my own boss and I love working with a great team. I enjoy meeting new people and I very much enjoy helping others.

What skills are important for anyone wishing to start in your profession?

In childcare it is essential that those starting a career in this sector either have GCSE C Maths and English, or achieve this prior to becoming a qualified Level 3 Nursery Practitioner. Personally, we like those joining our organisation as an Apprentice to be reasonably confident in communicating with others, willing to work as part of a team, willing to learn, listen and ask questions and willing to be flexible.

What main personal attributes do you think is important for your type of job?

Confidence, kindness, patience, good communicator, willing to work with others, willing to develop themselves personally and in line with organisational objectives, to act as a positive role model to others.

Do you have any tips or suggestions on how young people and adults can enter your industry?

Look for work experience opportunities not just as part of your school work experience week but offer to come in over the holidays – show that you are eager to learn. I personally think Apprenticeships are the best way to enter our sector but there are also very good full time study opportunities at our local colleges.

What career progression opportunities are available in your business?

Apprenticeship, Nursery Assistant, Nursery Nurse/Practitioner, Room or Crèche Manager, Deputy Day Care Manager, Day Care Manager, Area Manager, Business Owner. Many also decide to specialise after a few years in childcare or go on to teaching in Schools. There are also opportunities of working abroad for holiday companies.

Why is it important for the construction sector to attract and train young people and new entrants?

Childcare is a growing sector and it is important to recruit and train young people for long term career opportunities.

What trends do you predict for your industry within the next 10 years? E.g. is it a growing market requiring more young entrants.

It's certainly a growing sector.

General words of wisdom

This is a competitive sector so you need to stand out from the crowd when applying for Apprenticeships. You need to make a strong impression from application stage through to interview, during your probationary period and until the end of your Apprenticeship. Be willing to learn, flexible and don't be afraid to ask questions. Also be prepared for hard work both physically in providing care and the amount of administration necessary for monitoring the children you provide care and education for.

Further contact/information

Rachel is happy for young people to contact her to find out more about working in the childcare sector and setting up in business. To book your chat with Rachel, send an email to racheljones@fitnfunkids.co.uk leaving your name, phone number and the questions you have.