

Making waves

Stephanie Coats, of Oasis Hair Lounge, has proved successful at turning a lifelong interest into a flourishing business



Stephanie Coats: 'Working in de Gruchy gave me a great start in Jersey'
Picture: TONY PIKE (00797045)

Even when she was growing up in County Donegal, Ireland, Stephanie Coats always had a keen interest in hairdressing. 'I can't honestly remember a time when I wasn't begging my dad or my sister to be able to do something with their hair,' she said.

As soon as she was old enough, Stephanie worked Saturdays and school holidays in the region's largest salon and soon knew she had found her career, so, following her A-Levels, she enrolled in the L'Oreal School of Hairdressing in Dublin.

Graduating with flying colours, Stephanie realised that she was not going to have to wait for very long before she had acquired a loyal clientele.

'Coming from a typically large Irish family,' she said, 'I had no shortage of aunts or cousins looking for the benefits of my education. It was with this instant clientele that, when presented with an opportunity to run my own salon in Derry, I grasped it with both hands.'

Two years later, like so many other young people from Ireland looking for the promise of better weather and beautiful beaches, Stephanie, along with three friends, decided to

come to Jersey for a summer season - 'currently in its tenth year', Stephanie chuckled.

Soon after arriving in Jersey, Stephanie was offered a position within the de Gruchy's Hair Salon. 'Working in de Gruchy gave me a great start in Jersey,' she said. 'I received all the support necessary to create my client base which predominantly consisted of ladies' colouring - a subject I had specialised in while studying in Dublin.'

However, after nearly five years, Stephanie picked up the travelling bug again, and along with her then fiancée travelled the world for 12 months. 'Travelling gave me such a buzz,' she said, 'especially when I came across a wholesaler of clip-on hairpieces and clip-in extensions in South-East Asia. I instantly knew that these products would work in Jersey and immediately started researching the possibility of setting up a retail operation for when I returned to Jersey.'

A1 Hair & Beauty Supplies, retailing in hair accessories and salon exclusive hair products, was indeed set up as soon as Stephanie returned to Jersey. In addition, Stephanie also decided to take up a position with

Highlands College teaching the subject that she is so passionate about.

However, the demand from Stephanie's former clientele resulted in her taking on more and more mobile hairdressing, her client base grew until the demand could no longer be satisfied with a mobile service. It was then that Stephanie took over the ownership of Oasis Hair Lounge at St Peter's Country Apartment's, which she merged with her retail business.

Following three years of successfully operating Oasis Hair in St Peter, Stephanie was ready to expand her business, which meant opening in the heart of St Helier.

Oasis Hair Lounge, in Beresford Street, is truly an oasis in town. With a completely redeveloped hair salon, Stephanie has created a bright and vibrant space in which to have your look transformed. 'I would be delighted if I could get all of your readers to my grand opening on Friday, 9 October,' Stephanie boldly said. She is proudly offering drinks and nibbles from 3 pm along with fantastic offers and prizes - an offer not to be missed.

We have the technology

Chris Clark, of C5 Alliance, knows what has to be done to remain at the forefront of IT consultancy



Chris Clark: 'It is all well and good identifying your target areas but this needs to be underpinned with skilled individuals'

In August 2008, one of my colleagues, Simon Brown, wrote an article for the JEP's Wealth supplement. He ended his article with the following pertinent comments regarding business and technology and how best to ride the impending storm:

Pragmatism is key

'Although we all need to tighten our belts in the current market, we still need to make sure that we're aligned for success in the future. For this reason, the IT decisions that we make today need to be pragmatic rather than dogmatic, and they need to reflect reality rather than idealism. Pragmatism is the key and there's never been a better time to find a trusted adviser who can help you make those decisions that are right for now, right for the future and cost effective. Take some time to think about the investments you need to make to get you through the credit crunch, but don't forget that it will end eventually and that's when the high ground is up for grabs.'

Just over 12 months on, we're being informed that there is possibly light at the end of the tunnel and although organisations remain cautious, activity is most certainly on the increase.

However, the question is this - who took Simon's advice? We did!

So what exactly have we done?

At the end of last year we sat down, reflected on what had been our best year ever and outlined our simple three-point plan to beat the downturn, I am sure that nothing here is a revolution, but it seems to be working for us.

Review our strengths and weaknesses

We were not arrogant in our approach either, we engaged Island Analysis to undertake a full 360 sector review to provide us with qualitative results - rather than to base our strategies on hearsay and assumptions. We had absolute confirmation on what we do well and we now know what we do not so well. We continue to capitalise on the former and take effective steps on the latter. This helped us to:

Sharpen our focus

To put it simply, we have refined our explicit, unparalleled focus on key areas more than ever.

Infrastructure design and implementation

Using the latest, cost effective 'green' technologies.

Business process re-engineering: Both mapping and utilising technology to automate, helping our client's to become more efficient, effective and consistent regarding quality.

Bespoke analytics: Both inward (management information) and outward facing (market analytics) to ensure that organisations are informed as to what is going on.

Content, document and relationship management platforms: Including significant investment in processes around client due diligence, anti-money laundering and sanction matching - never has it been more relevant to have a single view of your client, their interactions with you and their value to your organisation.

Obviously, it is all well and good identifying your target areas but this needs to be underpinned with skilled individuals.

Our people make C5 Alliance, so we have invested in them.

We have made an unparalleled investment in training during the year with 65% of our growing team (now just shy of 50) across Jersey and Guernsey being sent around the globe to attend the most relevant courses for their explicit skills. Whether it was upgrading core infra-

structure qualifications for the latest technologies or learning the best practice approach to developing secure, online banking software, our teams have been in attendance with quite simply, the world's best in their explicit fields.

By making sure that we are the most highly skilled and cost effective IT consultancy in the Channel Islands delivering valuable, competitive advantage solutions to Industry, we have maintained a healthy book of business and ensured that our clients too, are exactly where they need to be in the current market, right at the forefront of a new economic dawn.

C5 Alliance has the most experienced, skilled and qualified team of IT consultants in the Channel Islands. We deliver significant technological solutions to financial institutions, legal firms and government based within international finance centres around the world. Our recent projects range from overseeing worldwide system mergers to the development of market leading Internet banking applications.