**Wine Associated Products and Events**

**11.05.2018**

XX and P, a partnership who are on TV and radio, run the “W. W. Festival”, offer corporate consulting and cruise services amongst other things. They are equal partners and are both Masters of Wine. They started building their company before having children and now have two aged 8 and 10.

CG: Please can you give me an over view of what you do?

XX: Well it’s all to do with wine, as we are both Masters of Wine. We have been working with wine for 10 years and it involves writing about wine, consulting …… with P.r as a partnership, but we do work separately as well. It works well for us as parents because we either of us can undertake the work the other be home. If they particularly want a woman or a man then we can do that too, a lot of people like to have both of us so they can get different perspectives, if we are doing tastings and we like to work together. So it means we have that buffer, flexibility.

So going back to what we do, we write, consult as the moment we are working for a river cruse company. So that’s a contract that we have to go on some cruises for a 24 hours in and out. So we host a after dinner wine tasting evening and then run a quiz the next day. These are wine tasting cruises, through wine country, that are sold with us being part of the deal. We also chair competitions, write articles and books, we have our annual wine festival in Winchester.

CG how does the Festival work?

XX: We launched that 4 years ago now. It slightly different in that we are co-directors (P and myself) with another director, who does all the business stuff. So that runs like a separate company. It’s over a weekend, 1500 visitors and 40+ exhibitors. We charge the exhibitors to exhibit and the visitors pay an entrance fee and we host master classes. We just beginning to expand this, we are going to XX this year and have a presence there. It’s a different format - more of a wine bar, but follows a similar theme that we created for the Festival “follow your taste”.

XX started last year and it’s in its second. Our Festival is about 4 years. We are also looking to expand the Festival in 2019, our own one. Aiming for a slow expansion of that format to anyone town.

We do TV and radio, we stopped regular TV, but we are constantly working on new projects and proposals. We are also working on a education events; last weekend we hosted the Masters of Wine 3 day tasting event to educate students with tasting papers and exams.

Frankly we are wine people who do everything around wine apart from selling wine. Although that will change soon as we are starting to make our own wine too, but that’s a charity project. To raise the profile of a local wine producers and our own profile at the same time, we are getting the local community involved with competitions and events.

CG: A social enterprise element?

XX: We always try to bring that into each project we do. The Wine Festival has a supported charity, this new project is community related, also some of the TV pipeline projects are community projects too.

CG: What was it that brought you in? What was the trigger point that brought you in?

XX: I trained and worked as an actress for about 10 years.

CG: So you have never worked in a “corporate job”, working in a company in a standard role?

XX: No, I have never had a proper job! Well I temped in a PR job when I was 16…

CG: I think perhaps for some people being in a corporate job makes it easier in the sense that you know about the processes and requirements for a company to operate. It might be more challenging for you, because it’s almost a new world.

XX: Yes, that is right, yes very true. It probably remains an ongoing challenge for me actually. Then you add in the family and children, it’s just chaos really. Whereas P.r did work in the corporate world beforehand, so in a sense the business organisation that comes into our lives, P.r has brought more of that.

CG; So did you transition from acting into wine easily?

XX: I didn’t work enough as an actress. I was doing pantomime in Oxford and OC was part of it, and he got me into it. I started to consider focusing more on the wine as I was naturally really interested in it. My initial thought was wine presenting; I was so naïve how competitive it was. My parents were hotels and pubs, so I had catering world. When work was short, I started going to an evening class. Bit by bit, it was a very slow transition; less in acting and more in wine.

CG: A private passion and a natural skill became an income stream.

XX: I did the Masters of Wine, the ultimate point in the wine journey with a new baby.

CG: How did you access the wine opportunities?

XX: Initially for a few years I wasn’t a Master of Wine, I was wining work and income. But I distinctly remember saying to P.r, I need to get that MoW because I need it for credibility, particularly as a women, I don’t want to have to keep proving myself all the time. P.r thought that was nonsense, and he may have been right, but I really felt that I needed it. I thought if I could just get the MoW, we could get over that first bit, over those initial questions. Then when I did the job it may be good or bad, but there is no doubting that I am qualified to do this.

CG: And do you think those issues were you own individual confidence or related to the industry and people you were dealing with?

XX; The wine industry, it is a very traditional, male world. However a lot of the men in it are very pro-female. They don’t try and push you out. There is a little bit of men enjoying girls in short skirts! They are very old fashioned, but it is changed very fast. There are many more female MoW and journalists now and wine makers. I think females are treated mostly with respect. Wine is a happy world, you do go in to earn a fortune, but you can have a happy life.

CG; You achieved you credibility, and I think you had a new baby when you achieved you MoW?

XX: Yes everything seemed to happen at the same time. In our world what has been crucial is the Susie and P.r element, I am not a standalone woman who has built a business on her own. I have done it with a man. I think opportunities have come up because we have made ourselves as desirable as possible, with our profiles. The Wine Festival is different though, we have created that from scratch, it happened because it was our idea and we pushed it and built it. That was the most proactive way we built income. Now we have a name and contacts and a track record we can be quite reactive for a lot of our other work now. It tends to come to us because we have been very proactive to doing the “right” things (the books, the events, the right TV etc). We set the profile, credentials and visibility.

CG: Thinking about The Wine Festival, how did you approach creating that?

XX: I tend to be; “ let’s just do it” person. P.r is a bit risk averse I suppose, he sees the thing that might make it not possible. He tends to take a glass half full, whereas I am a the glass is overflowing, this will be totally fine, let’s just do it. I tend to be more the ideas person, creative, I tend to have a sense what is required in a situation creatively. I designed the “Follow your Taste” bar at our Festival, that is now new XX loved and ask us to run at their festival too. I can up with all the strap lines for it, that were a bit silly but I knew we needed something that was short, concise and punchy. I think I read what people require quite well.

In that sense we have a very female / male response to understanding people.

P.r is the one who insists we need to support a charity at each event. I am more “really?”, I suppose just more focused on the business deliver; practical.

CG; When you have these big events, how do you split the domestic arrangements?

XX: Initially when we first had our daughter I found it unbelievably difficult. I was expected to essentially look after her, he just assumed that as I was her mum I would be looking after her. I couldn’t cope with that, at all, I was never that bothered about having children and here I was lumbered with a new baby. It took me a very long time to realise that it was just easier if I did it. Basically did it and then P.r still needs to do the extras around that. We all know, that children constantly grow and change and their requirements are so different at each stage. You think they have it sorted and then you realise it isn’t sorted because they change and again something new, different is needed.

Now I still do all of the domestic organisation; all the cooking, all the washing, all the organising of cleaning, all the shopping, all……it’s just the way we organise all lives. I do no gardening whatsoever! If there is for example, a trip abroad that one or the other could do, or a job that is away from home for a few days, I tend to persuade P.r that he should do it. It’s not him demanding / assuming, it’s because I know it’s easier. So yes, I have kind of slightly let that happen ….. but then it suits me.

CG: How do you think that has impacted your work. You know I have found some women who can do all of that and still do all the work stuff too….And obviously is making your world quite local.

XX: Well if an opportunity comes up abroad, it doesn’t mean I can’t travel. Certainly as the children have got older, it has become way easier and I can travel and I can go off and work, it isn’t a problem. What I feel is that P.r spends a lot of time at the computer reading the news and keeping up to date, so he’s got a handle on everything that is going on, so it’s easier for him to sort of go “right I am needed for that job next week, quickly prepare and get it all ready and off I go, all done”. I feel I have to factor in more preparation time, because often I am going back to square one, so hold on a minute, I have the kids stuff in my head that needs sorting, I need to push that out and start. I need time to think about it clearly, more time to read and research. So I am always happy to take on jobs, but not if I don’t have time to prepare, that’s when I get stressed and panicky. I am not comfortable winging things, I like to be over prepared. So I need lots of preparation time.

It can happen because there are the two of us. In terms of popping up to London for tastings we kind of split it, he probably does do more than me, but I do a lot too. We have just written a book together, where we have done all the research together, he did a lot of the writing and I did the editing.

The way I look at our life right now, is that the balance for me makes me happy. If I didn’t have P. and I had to do it all myself, I don’t know how I would do it. I really don’t know. I think it’s because we have our team that it works.

CG Say P.’s working away, have you got a local network to support you?

XX: We have a part-time nanny, we have one set of grandparents who are local in Winchester who help but only to a certain extent, they are getting older and feel they can’t cope unless it is absolutely 100% organised and clear. My mum who lives in Yorkshire, if she was around she would be more chaotic but she would pick up anything. Beyond that …. Not nearly, I don’t feel comfortable ….occasionally I don’t mind sleepovers when someone offers to have Thomas and we have theirs back, but I have never felt super comfortable about asking people and feeling like I owe them. I would rather pay somebody.

So that is limiting, but it’s not impossible by any means. I can still work if P.r is away, it’s just more complicated, just takes a lot of organisation and time.

CG: So would you say, if you compare yourself to P.r, because of the children, your side of the “business” can become more spatially constrained – place and time wise? Your freedom is more restricted, it’s a different experience to his?

XX: Yes, that is fair, but only just fair. But if I said if I wanted to go away for a month, he would support me and it would happen….

CG: Yes, I am not really thinking of your individual situation, reflecting on how generally those roles arise.

XX: Yes I definitely do have to consider a lot of things. Would I prefer it that way, no. It is true that it certainly happens, but I like it.

CG: Do you think you can work around it, it doesn’t change substantial outcomes or has it stopped you pursuing opportunities?

XX: I don’t think it stops me really, perhaps if I had more time to think about it, then yes I might think it does. There might have been the odd times in the last 5-10 years when I have thought, that is just not fair, I really want to do that and it is clearly not going to happen. It is rare over the years. I suppose what you could say is that if I had less time with responsibilities for the children, I could have made more of my business life and pushed harder and been more successful.

I think the question is, if I pushed harder and I think I would be somewhere else and not where I am now, yes. But that’s not in my nature, I am not that pushy anyway. I think I would have probably been more dissatisfied oddly, because I would want to make the most of that freedom and time and actually what can you realistically achieve, even with it. I would be much harder on myself about it and in a way I think it is very easy to criticise other things, like domestic stuff. But I think you have to take personality into account as well, you know why am I in the situation I am?

I have had children yes, but other women have had children too. Some are CEOs of huge companies and got 5 kids. That would never have been me. It is being honest with yourself and who you are. I love downtime and family time and pottering.

CG: For some that downtime can help creative ideas.

XX It gives you a balance. I think it would be untrue to say, if only I had more time or less responsibility I would have been Jo Malone. I look at my sister, who is a proper 4 kids business woman, constantly thinking of new ideas, constantly looking for new opportunities. She is so much more pushy than me. She has been very successful. So personality is important.

What I do know is, if I didn’t work I would go mad, completely mad. Only when I work do I feel properly energised and worthwhile, have a point to my life you. I get slightly depressed on those days when I don’t work, you know when I don’t have a proper focus. If I have a deadline in a day, I do hate it but love it by the end.

CG: You have your local network, how have you found building business network, gaining access and be part of it?

XX: Now I have access to all of it, because I have done it for long enough and I know enough people. We are pretty well thought of in the wine media. I think we have enough status now, that pretty much every business or people I wanted to talk to, we could get access.

CG: And as a contrast, how did you find that at the beginning?

XX: Much more difficult.

CG: That was because…..your profile, not in the in-group etc?

XX: I think it’s just until people recognise you and know you, they could be talking to anybody. I respect the fact that they won’t give you so much time if they don’t know who you are, or what you have done. It’s nice to be open, it’s a world that will welcome you.

CG: So that’s the industry? Sometimes you can find networks that are quite closed and exclusive and it’s very difficult to break in.

XX: No I find them open, they are working so hard to bring more females in. I don’t think I was excluded from anything because a) I was a women and b) because anyone was being unkind. It was natural progression of schmoozing and networking and sticking at it. If you are better at that kind of thing you just get there quicker. To get to the most important people, you often have to be nice to the ones below them, don’t burn any bridges.

CG; Sometimes the sector can really affect women’s ability to network.

XX: Yes, with wine it doesn’t matter if you are male or female, it’s about how good you are at networking. When I think what determines who has got on more quickly or slowly it’s been personality. There are plenty of women who have gone a long way on big personalities and pushiness, and likewise men too, and there are those who haven’t got very far because they are too quiet and nice.

CG: Just one last question – why do you think so few women are entrepreneurs?

XX; It’s a personal view? You would think actually, a small business is the most obvious way for a woman to earn money around children. I know it’s a risk, but they then get to do it on their own terms and in their own time. I think it’s harder to be employed, perhaps maybe in the local Barclays Bank on the ill or whatever maybe that is easier with its regularity. But having a full on job in the city, for instance must so difficult. You often judged on hour many hours you do rather than your work. How ridiculously early you can get in and how late you can work. I can’t imagine why fewer …. All I can think is that it’s confidence and the having the courage of their convictions. Maybe the classic difference between the sexes – men can think, yes I’ve got it, I’m going t do it and it’s going to work. Women have less confidence, in that ..well they won’t accept me, whereas I think a men would be why won’t they accept me? A more bullish mindset in general.

It is surprising, perhaps it’s the risk. Also if the husband has had a conventional job and the wife has stopped work for children. He may have built up his own savings, that are their savings but he earned them, she doesn’t feel she can access them. Because at the end of the day, you have to have some money to set up a business don’t you. So maybe there is a lack of equality in the financial situation, the resources.

**Personal Details**

Age: ~~16-29 30-39~~ 40-49 ~~50-59 60+~~

Nationality: British (white)

Country of origin: UK

Mode of working: Full Time~~:~~ Mostly ~~Part time:~~

Children: (1) ~~0-2 3-4~~ 5-11 ~~12-18~~

Children: (2) ~~0-2 3-4~~ 5-11 ~~12-18~~

Children: (3) 0-2 3-4 5-11 12-18

Children: (4) 0-2 3-4 5-11 12-18

Highest educational qualification: A’Levels

Location of business: Winchester

Home working: Mixed

Last position held in employment: Actress

Husband Occupation: Partner in business

Husband highest educational qualification: Degree

Household income: Dual ~~Single~~ (both incomes required)

**Please can you let me know how you judge your success?**

This is difficult to say but I think for me it is very much about working happily as a team with P.r, and showing my children that women are as important as men in the world of work. I feel that (as a team) we have chosen to spend a significant amount of time with our children as well as working, which means that we may not always be able to achieve as much in our working lives as we otherwise might, but we certainly won’t lie on our deathbeds regretting the fact that we didn’t spend enough time with our children. So a balance between work and home life matter very much to me and (most of the time!) I feel that we achieve that balance relatively successfully.

I also place great value on the positive feedback we get from our audiences / people who listen and watch us and take our advice - it makes everything we do feel worthwhile and a success.

**And has this changed since you first started?**

When I first started out my life was very different. I was single, had very little money, and had just given up a career in acting to try to be a successful wine expert (writer / broadcaster). I’m not sure I ever thought I’d manage it, but I wanted to give it a go. The changes in my personal life since that time have really helped to shape my career and my success, and these are certainly changes that I could never have predicted when I started out. So yes, the way I judge my success today is very different from anything I could have imagined when I started out.