

NOTES TO SELF

Cindy Newnham General Manager, Lifeline Alarm Systems Ltd



What was your first job?

My Mother had me cleaning her office at Island Brickworks, aged 11. I did this with a friend; we both received that small manila wage envelope, complete with payslip at the end of the week. A couple of years later, I was serving cream teas in Godshill.

After college, I went straight into the hotel industry, which I really enjoyed. I worked in reception at both a traditional sea side holiday location on the Island, together with a more corporate company, The Metropole in Brighton, so have experienced the delights and challenges of both! There was always the opportunity of overtime in the hotel bar or wine waitressing, the incentive was saving up for a new Ford XR2. After more than ten years in the hotel industry, the opportunity arose to work at Island Harbour for the company that built the initial waterside properties. That was really interesting and included anything from operating the lock, learning to sail, meeting planners and travelling around various cities.

How did you join Lifeline?

I met Graeme Lee from Lifeline when the company was heavily involved with GP Motor Racing, another passion of mine, and when Graeme mentioned his secretary was leaving, I jumped at the chance. After a few years, I became the PA to the Directors, and then during a restructure, I was appointed General Manager. The progression has been challenging of course, but also pleasurable and I definitely enjoy having input in the direction, development and progress of the business.

What have you learned about business?

Number one is that I firmly believe your employees are your greatest asset, therefore, you need to ensure they feel appreciated and valued. I'm particularly passionate about that, also working together as a team, listening to suggestions, rewarding loyalty, impressing how important integrity, reliability and good manners are. I admit to being slightly obsessive about everyone understanding the importance of attention to detail and to genuinely care about delivering a high quality service, one to be proud of. Lifeline design, install, service and commission Electronic Fire and Security solutions. We are the only Island based Fire and Security company with ISO9001 Quality Assurance and NSI Gold accreditation for Security Systems and BAFE approval for Fire Detection and Alarm Systems. We were the first business to receive the IW Chamber QIB award. All of this sets us apart, it is definitely hard work preparing for audits and ensuring that we are totally professional and compliant in all areas, but so worth it.

It's always rewarding when we receive thanks and compliments from satisfied customers. The workload running a business can at times, seem overwhelming with scary time restraints, everything from HR to PR, learning the latest technology and prioritising schedules, but all of this goes back to the team, you need all those cogs in the wheel, each responsible for their own areas, then, mostly, it all comes together.

What have you learned about yourself?

Traditionally the security sector is a very male dominated industry, women are not seen as front-runners, and being 'old school' I used to easily accept this. However, I believe I have finally demonstrated that I am capable, and have been part of building an excellent team at Lifeline who have a sound knowledge and understanding of this specific industry. I guess, more than anything, I have learned that I am so much more confident that I imagined and exceptional at multi-tasking!

Is the Isle of Wight a different place to do business?

I enjoy living on the Island, I love being close to the sea and walking on the beach. However, the Island is different, I think unique. Sometimes an Island based business seems more challenging, particularly regarding technical resources. On the positive side, the work we receive is usually by recommendation, which is fantastic.

What advice would you give that younger version of yourself?

Surround yourself with good honest people, listen, learn, take opportunities, and be brave! 🍀