

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

July 2010

Each month *Connections* talks to a PrimeTime member to find out more about who they are, what they do, and their association with PrimeTime.



This month we spotlight
Emma Boyd
Director Client Relationships,
Far East
Ernst & Young

Personal talk ...

Connections: Where are you from originally, and how long have you been in Singapore?

Emma: I was brought up in the Scottish borders around hills and horses. I've lived here for four years.

Connections: Have you lived in other foreign countries?

Emma: Before Singapore, I stayed for short periods in Italy and Germany during and after university.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Emma: I felt oppressed by the negative British media because they keep telling you how bad everything is – if I catch even one minute of British newspeak, it depresses me instantly! We wanted to have an adventure and my husband, being a scriptwriter, had no geographical restrictions. So with Benedict just eight months old, I reminded myself that I had always intended to leave the UK (hence the early jaunts to Europe) and just decided to look for any job I could do and go for it! I found a financial advisory role and then networked like mad when we got here.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living here?

Emma: The people here generally have a bit more of 'get-up-and-go attitude' and they also have such diverse and fascinating backgrounds; the availability of great networking opportunities and accessibility to senior management; the closeness of 'exotic' destinations, and the safe feeling you have when you are out and about, especially with kids... oh, and I don't need to hear the news, unless I choose to!

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Emma: Through the week, I'm generally socialising/networking one way or another, now with some fitness sessions thrown in. Weekends are 100 per cent geared to great times with my four-year-old son, Benedict. Holidays tend to be adventurous, even if I'm at the beach I'll be looking for the speedboats and waterslides to have a go on, and we recently returned from three weeks on a jeep safari in the Himalayas. In the past I would have been trekking, but I didn't think Benedict was ready for that (maybe next time!).

Connections: Have you had any particularly interesting experiences you would like to share with us?

Emma: Well, India was great but too hard to summarise. At Waterbom, the big waterslide park in Bali, the staff saw that even at three, Benedict was brave and keen to try, so they allowed him on almost anything. I talk a lot about Benedict and I, and that's because my husband, as a creative, found the corporate culture in Singapore too stifling. He took up a friend's offer for him to do some teaching in Beijing and that's been a tricky balancing act for all concerned, although perhaps only an exaggeration of the situation many couples experience in Asia. Overall, I think it's been strengthening, which makes it, by my definition, an 'interesting' situation to be in.

... continued on next page

Connections: Which are your favourite restaurants/shops/places to go?

Emma: Mainly outdoor locations where Benedict and I can spend long happy hours - Jurong East Swimming Complex has the best Lazy River, Pasir Ris for the playground and the scooting/cycling and East Coast for the skating and remote control cars. We love Japanese food, particularly Sushi Tei. I am currently obsessed with dragging friends for celebratory cocktails while watching the sun go down from the New Asia Bar, 71st floor of Swissotel the Stamford.

Connections: What one thing would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?

Emma: Sincere unwavering serenity and as much happiness as is healthy in the face of all that life can throw at you!

Professional talk ...

Connections: Could you tell us a little about the company you work for and your current role?

Emma: I have just left PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to join Ernst & Young, both being “big four” audit/consulting firms. My role is to expand our knowledge of and relationships with the multinational financial services clients across Asia Pacific. I am focussed on advisory services (that is, anything that’s not audit work) and my client contacts are usually the c-suite, their direct reports and project managers.

Connections: How long have you been working in your present role?

Emma: Only two weeks with Ernst & Young, although this role builds on what I was doing at PwC – basically the role is the same but bigger. I was with PwC for three years.

Connections: Have you always worked in the same industry

Emma: In the UK, I started out (way back when) as a graduate management trainee with a blue chip life insurance company. I started on the operations side before moving across to sell to our high net worth client base – this is when I discovered my vocation in life! After 10 years there, we were taken over and I elected for redundancy to try out self-employment in a rather different field – an online art agency specialising in sculpture and artwork for gardens, representing around 100 UK artists. Then we had Benedict and after that we came to Asia.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about your job?

Emma: I enjoy being exposed to seriously able people, building their trust and working to find mutually satisfactory solutions for their needs /concerns. Key for me is the relative freedom of action, freedom of movement, being stretched by clients and the belief that hopefully, one day, they’ll pay me large bonuses!

Connections: What do you enjoy most about the company you work for?

Emma: Enjoying work for me hinges on having good people to work with, and Ernst & Young has that. It also has an entrepreneurial culture; the consultants come from their industry, from practice not theory.

Connections: Do you have any advice for job hunters trying to move into your industry?

Emma: Whatever your industry, my advice in Asia is, network, network, network! Have conversations and follow up, make the effort, be the one to reach out. You have to know what you have to offer and what you want so you can be out there and ask people to help you in a targeted way. Since arriving in Singapore, I haven’t heard many stories where someone sent in a CV and covering letter and even got an interview, never mind a job! It’s all about personal contact, however brief. Here, it’s possible to get around the procedures if the right person puts you forward – if they like you, there’s your opportunity. Try and get referrals and introductions, that’s the way to go.

... continued on next page

PrimeTime talk ...

Connections: When did you join PrimeTime and how did you find out about it?

Emma: Networking was my chosen strategy for clients and job opportunities, so I hunted it down on the net and joined the instant I arrived in Singapore.

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Emma: I co-chair the Marketing and Mother's Support groups. I also attend HR and others on an ad hoc basis. I keep an eye on most of the groups.

Connections: Do you volunteer at PrimeTime? If so, in what areas have you become involved?

Emma: I co-run two of the groups, one of them being a social group, the other professional. It's been great working with each of the co-chairs and we definitely have a lot of fun while being productive! There are always great women attending in different forms and for different reasons. From time to time I have helped with the registration for 2nd Thursday Meetings too.

Connections: What do you personally feel are the benefits of being a PrimeTime member?

Emma: I have met so many personally interesting as well as professionally useful people at PrimeTime events. I always say that half of the event is the speaker and the other half is the other attendees.

Whatever you want from it, you can find it if you are in an open frame of mind.

From the moment I arrived at PrimeTime there has never been an awkward moment because people are friendly and willing to exchange ideas and information.

The Mothers group is very different to the formal events with speakers, etc, because it's a very personal thing and 100 per cent about connecting with likeminded women who don't find themselves at ease just having coffee and cake or circling the pool every day. Really, people have joined PrimeTime just to come to our informal mothers group gatherings because of the other ladies they met over regular lunches or at the weekend playgroups – our PrimeTime Mothers would seem to be definitely different!

Connections: Which was the most interesting or inspiring PrimeTime event you've attended?

Emma: In the days of President Bush, the US Ambassador to Singapore Patricia Herbold was the guest at a 2nd Thursday talk. That's when I thought "what an organisation!" to be able to mobilise such a lady to come and share her experiences. And she specifically talked about her personal challenges as a wife, mother and, it seemed, accidentally persistent career woman.

Thank you, Emma!