

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

June 2010

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



This month we spotlight Josephine Feilzer, Director Principal at Finance Fortis Bank Nederland, to be re-branded as ABN AMRO Q3 2010

Personal talk ...

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

Josephine: I'm from The Netherlands and arrived in Singapore in June last year.

Connections: Have you lived in other foreign countries? If so, where?

Josephine: In 2003, I moved to Greece for two and a half years, which was then followed by a move to Hong Kong for three years. In Hong Kong, I met my husband and we moved to Singapore together.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Josephine: The secondments to Greece and Hong Kong were based on growing the ship finance and intermodal finance activities for Fortis Bank. In October 2008, during the financial crisis, our bank-insurance group was nationalised and split into a Belgium part and a Dutch part. Subsequently, I lost my Hong Kong business to the Belgium part, while my expat labour contract was with the Dutch side; in simple terms, I was suddenly working for a competitor. After six months, I moved to the Dutch part of Fortis and we set up a new bank from scratch in Singapore: Fortis Bank Nederland, Singapore Branch.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living here?

Josephine: The quality of air compared with Hong Kong!

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Josephine: Reading, hockey, skiing, tennis and sailing.

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

Josephine: How about a "lost-in-translation" on the Chinese ski-slopes. That was a fascinating experience! My client invited me to stay an extra Saturday after days of meetings, to experience skiing in Dalian. Given our existing relationship and my curiosity, I thought this was a good idea. The day before I arrived in China, I received news from the client that he had arranged a "ski-master" to teach us both some basic skiing – it was his first time on the slopes! I tried to explain in half English-Chinese that I am actually a pretty decent skier after 30 years of experience, but I think this information was lost in translation.

Saturday came and since talking failed, I thought I should show him. Coming down the first run from the steepest slope, slaloming between Chinese kamikaze skiers, the crowd started cheering and my clients face turned from pure shock to extreme pride. After a photo-session (we must have made the local newspapers), the reward was overwhelming: chicken feet and a vast amount of 80 per cent rice-wine!

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

Josephine: Rochester Park, Botanic Garden and Sentosa beach lounge.

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

Josephine: I would love to learn Mandarin at a general-to-little-business-level. I started lessons in Hong Kong, but have not picked it up here in Singapore. Any tips on good teachers are very welcome!

Professional talk ...

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

Josephine: I work for Fortis Bank Nederland, a state-owned Dutch bank, which will be merged with ABN AMRO in the second half of this year. The group provides retail and private banking, and wholesale banking including the Energy-, Commodity- and Transportation Finance (ECT) market. I work for principal finance within ECT and focus on equity-related investments in the shipping and offshore service sectors.

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

Josephine: Shipping and intermodal finance for 12 years in Rotterdam, Greece, Hong Kong and Singapore. Principal Finance is a new business in Asia and I been doing that since 1 May.

Connections: Have you always worked in the same industry?

Josephine: Yes, I guess I'm an all-round banker. Although always working for the transportation sector, I've (cross-) sold or developed most of the bank's products, from leasing to private banking, asset management, global markets, asset-based finance, structured finance, cash management, trade-finance and others, and actually find most of them interesting.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about your job?

Josephine: The clients: usually self-made, eccentric, with a go-do-it attitude and a global mind-set.

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

Josephine: A large amount of freedom, self-starting and continuing business development.

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

Josephine: The recent "we are what we think" session was very interesting and recognisable, both on cultural mayhems as well as on how the brain reacts to major changes in work and living environments. Sharing experiences with like-minded individuals is valuable and puts things in perspective. It always helps knowing you're not the only one experiencing these things, and it's good to hear the different ways of coming to a solution.

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

Josephine: The ship finance sector is still fragile after the financial crisis, which led to some of the major shipping banks to scale down or come to a complete halt. The main expanding banks are the Asia-Pacific ones, so start looking there first.

PrimeTime talk ...

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

Josephine: I joined in October/November 2009 and heard about it through friends.

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Josephine: Book review, WineTime, DineTime and the small business group

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

Josephine: A broad network of women working in a wide range of businesses, whom you can exchange views and experiences, while enjoying pleasant social dinners and drinks.

Thank you, Josephine!