

## PrimeTime Member Spotlight

October 2009

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

Anja Landgraf

Creative Director/Fashion designer  
Owner: Stylemates Consulting

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### Personal talk ...

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

**Anja:** I am from Germany and I have been in Singapore for five years.

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

**Anja:** Before I came to Singapore I lived in Germany but I lived and worked for periods of up to a few months in Japan, India, Taiwan, Fiji Islands and the US. Singapore is the first place where I started to settle down a bit even though that wasn't really planned initially.

**Connections:** What brought you to Singapore?

**Anja:** Pure curiosity. In summer 2004 I realised, together with my then-boyfriend-now-husband, that it was time to explore the world again. We had taken a gap year to travel around the world and wanted to explore Asia-Pacific to live and work here for longer. So we short-listed Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, China and even New Zealand. We then sold all our belongings and bought a flight to Singapore as we thought it would be easiest to start off here. After our arrival and without knowing anyone we put up in a small hotel in Chinatown. Over the next weeks we called all the design companies to ask whether they would need someone. Luckily both of us managed to find a job within our set period of three months so we decided to stay on for a while.

**Connections:** What do you enjoy most about living here?

**Anja:** The people of different nationalities and backgrounds that you get to meet everyday. I feel it is very interesting and at times inspiring to learn where people come from and what brought them here. The atmosphere is relaxed and you can get in touch with people easily. I also like the warm days and nights. The city I come from, Hamburg, simply has too many rainy days. And Singapore being so well connected within the region makes it a great hub for travelling. It is also a good place to set up a business with its registration being so straight forward.

**Connections:** What are your interests and hobbies?

**Anja:** Design in its wider sense, art - especially rather unusual art pieces that make you think and question things, running and dancing. I started learning Salsa dancing a few years back but unfortunately had to quit my classes as I couldn't commit when my business picked up. And for sure I love travelling!

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

**Anja:** When we recently came back from a one-month-trip to Europe we found three really huge frogs in our living room and it took us quite a while to chase them out! We also have snakes here in Wessex Estate from time to time, but I don't find it intrusive as we've chosen to live here - within nature as well as in Asia - and I do like it a lot.

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

**Anja:** I like to spend time around the area where I live and work, Portsdown Road in Wessex Estate, for example Laurent's Café & Chocolate Bar and Klee. Walking around Bukit Timah Nature Reservoir is another great option on the weekend. I also like Samy's Curry Restaurant at Dempsey Hill and I favour all kinds of Japanese food.

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

**Anja:** Oh that is an interesting question and I find it difficult to nail it down to just one thing. There are a few countries I still want to explore – I'd really like to travel overland from Asia to Europe, or vice versa.

## Professional talk ...

**Connections:** Please tell us about your business.

**Anja:** I am the owner and creative director of Stylemates Consulting, a fashion and bridal consultancy. We create design solutions for today's discerning women who value conceptual design, fine fabrics and high quality. The dresses and gowns we design follow an understated, elegant look and my signature style of clean-cut draped lines keeps them wearable but interesting.

We basically offer two product lines: bespoke bridal outfits and ready-to-wear evening ensembles. All the wedding gowns we create are designed from scratch and hand crafted to the measurements of the client, making each piece truly unique. They are sold under my own name. In December 2008 I launched my ready-to-wear label, Glor. Under this name I create exclusive evening wear, dresses and gowns for different occasions such as lounge parties, dinners, cocktail invites and gala events. You can find out more about it by visiting [www.stylematesconsulting.com](http://www.stylematesconsulting.com) - we just finished the revamp of the website.

**Connections:** What did you do before you started your own business?

**Anja:** I worked as a lecturer at Temasek Polytechnic's fashion department where I taught fashion design, draping and fashion history. I later joined Lasalle College of the Arts teaching more fashion management based subjects. I still teach there a few hours a week which provides me with a good balance of sharing my knowledge with those who will become the future leaders of Singapore's fashion industry and my own design work. Previously I worked as a freelance consultant for other design companies as well as corporate institutions providing help with the design development process. This enabled me to work on a variety of projects, ranging from creating uniforms to working with a team of researchers on the development of a motion capture suit for health care.

**Connections:** How long have you had your own business?

**Anja:** For about three years now.

**Connections:** How did you get started?

**Anja:** I was born into an architect family which, I guess, laid the foundation for my career in the creative fields. Since I was a young teen I knew I wanted to study fashion and so I graduated with a degree in fashion design from the University of Applied Sciences in Germany many years later.

My passion has always been for women's wear, especially occasion wear. Throughout my studies and professional career I focused much on designing dresses or simply elegant outfits, most of them made out of silk, my favourite fabric. I simply love its softness, flow and touch. At university I used to save up my hard-earned money to buy expensive fabrics that would best complement my designs. I never compromised using fabrics of lower quality.

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Actually I didn't come to Singapore thinking I would run my own business here; it happened due to circumstances. While still teaching in Temasek Polytechnic I got more and more requests for commissioned design work and hence decided to change my employer-bounded employment pass to the more flexible EntrePass. A few fortunate things happened and I ventured more into the occasion wear market as I saw a niche there.

**Connections:** What were the toughest challenges you've faced as an entrepreneur with your own business?

**Anja:** The greatest challenge is that I did everything myself in the beginning and days are simply never long enough. I am very passionate about what I do so I find it difficult to stop if there is still work that needs to be done (which is always the case!). I have now learnt to delegate tasks and ask people for help who know better than me. They are mainly freelancers or other small businesses but I also have one part-time employee by now.

**Connections:** What do you enjoy most about having your own business?

**Anja:** It is definitely the opportunity to decide what direction I want to take with my business. Apart from that it is also the satisfaction I get when my customers appreciate my efforts and are happy to wear a piece that I have designed.

**Connections:** Have any of the PrimeTime programs helped you in starting or growing your business?

**Anja:** The networking sessions help in getting useful contacts and the Small Business Group provides some great knowledge and sharing sessions.

**Connections:** Any advice for those thinking of starting their own businesses in Singapore?

**Anja:** Go out and mix with other entrepreneurs! That will inspire you and lead to lots of ideas. There are many places in Singapore where you can network. Nevertheless the country is relatively small, so it works great as a stepping stone or base once the business picks up, especially when you're dealing with niche market products.

## **PrimeTime talk ...**

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

**Anja:** I heard about Primetime through a friend shortly after I came here in 2004. I then checked out the website and liked it but only decided to become a member after I started the business in 2006.

**Connections:** Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

**Anja:** I have attended a few Small Business Group functions which I find very helpful and I hope to attend more Marketing group functions in future.

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

**Anja:** Yes - I have volunteered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday meeting, at the front desk.

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

**Anja:** Definitely meeting so many women from so diverse backgrounds – I have already developed some good friendships with a few of them. I also find the talks and meetings really interesting and helpful.

Thank you Anja!