

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

March 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

Jane Horan
Founder and CEO, The Horan Group

Interviewed by:
Andrea Chalupova Hessmo

Personal talk ...

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

Jane: I've lived in Singapore for two years and I'm originally from Huntington Beach in California, also known as "the surf-capital in the world." I'm not certain how Huntington branded this phrase because there are other great surfing places in the world – Bali and Sydney to name only two.

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

Jane: We moved here from Hong Kong, where we lived for 17 years. Previously, in 1985, I lived in China. I studied Chinese in Beijing for three months - 8 hours a day, six days a week – and at the end of 3 months I couldn't say much. I then moved south to Changsha, Hunan Province (Mao's birthplace) where I taught English to graduate engineers and studied Chinese at Changsha Technical University.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Jane: My job. I was recruited away from the Mouse (Disney) in Hong Kong to join the Cheese (Kraft Foods) as Director of Organisational Development.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living here?

Jane: The food and the people! It's easy to live in Singapore and it's a great place to raise kids. There are many more open outdoor spaces and clean air - and that's important to us as my son plays a lot of soccer.

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Jane: I like reading murder mysteries by authors Jeffrey Deaver and Michael Connelly. I also love surfing and mountain bike riding. Singapore is a great place for outdoor sports.

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

Jane: A few years ago we went to Kerala, India - I'm a fan and follower of Ayurvedic food and the way of life. We found a small place in the middle of Kerala along the canals. Every day my son organised a soccer match with the local kids in the community and at the end of the week the entire village came out for the final match. It was fun to watch this barefoot soccer match in the middle of a goat farm and the players wearing Dhotis.

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

Jane: I highly recommend “Ivins”, a Peranakan restaurant in Binjai park. It’s a very local place, nothing fancy and they serve the best Peranakan food I’ve had in Singapore. Another lovely hidden place that people may not know about is the little cafe/library in the Esplanade. I stumbled across this cafe and found the ambiance delightful – it’s filled with art students and a great collection of books, magazines and music. I’d also recommend Deli-Vege on South Bridge Road for Chinese vegetarian food, delightful dishes and great service. And finally, Joan Bowen Cafe, located in an East Coast neighbourhood on 9 Jalan Wangi. This is a great social enterprise cafe empowering children with special needs. The fish and chips are fantastic!

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

Jane: I would like to write a bestselling novel!

Professional talk ...

Connections: Please tell us about your business.

Jane: I work in a few areas: 1) Empowering Women through organizational savvy workshops and coaching, and consulting to organizations on gender balance. 2) Innovation using Systematic Inventive Thinking (SIT). 3) Cross cultural development with global teams. My website is:

<http://www.thehorangroup.com> – I write a blog on positive politics and cross cultural leadership.

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

Jane: I worked for multinational organizations in Human Resources, Leadership and Organizational Development

Connections: How long have you had your own business?

Jane: Since 2008.

Connections: How did you get started?

Jane: I was made redundant quite unexpectedly and did a lot of soul-searching in terms of future goals and what I really wanted to do. I’ve been fortunate to work with and for very powerful women leaders, and after researching women leadership I decided to launch a business focused on accelerating development and empowering women.

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

Jane: The biggest challenge is finding the right balance - as an entrepreneur you’re the marketing, sales, finance and business development person wrapped into one. It presses all your buttons, stretches your capabilities and you learn what you don’t know very quickly.

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

Jane: The freedom and flexibility.

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

Jane: The Marketing and 2nd Thursday talks and events helped shape my thinking. In particular these events provided an avenue to bounce ideas off other women. PrimeTime attracts a wonderful group of like-minded women – it’s a great community for knowledge sharing, enrichment and inspiration.

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

Jane: First find out what you want to do and where your passions are. Once you have this in mind, complete a feasibility study of the markets. Take a page out of a strategy book – Michael Porter – to examine the market conditions, from competition to barriers to entry and differentiating factors. Write a business plan and stick to it. Ask for advice. Finally, let go and delegate – we can’t do it all. And if you’re low on funds – barter.

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PrimeTime talk ...

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

Jane: I joined in 2008. PrimeTime is very global so I knew about it already while I was in Hong Kong. Also, on a business trip to France someone mentioned PrimeTime.

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Jane: I subscribe to Human Resources and Marketing.

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

Jane: I currently serve on the board as 1st Vice President.

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

Jane: It's wonderful to be connected with so many like-minded women who are also very supportive.

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

Jane: The talk by Somaly Mam, the activist who spoke against human trafficking in Cambodia.

Thank you Jane!