

## PrimeTime Member Spotlight

November 2008

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

**Marie-Hélène Piederiet**  
Owner of Past Perfect Collection

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### Personal talk ...

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I'm from Holland and I've been in Singapore since May 2007.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** Before moving to Singapore I lived in Mumbai, India for nearly 5 years.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** India was great but my husband and I were keen to start a business of our own. We knew we wanted to stay in Asia so we started evaluating different countries. Singapore came out on top because it's relatively easy to start a business here and there's a high concentration of expats – our target customers.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I very much like the alfresco life - the sun, the great weather and being able to eat dinner outside. I love the huge variety of food and I like trying everything from Laksa to Indian food. I'm particularly enjoying the good Australian beef after my time in India – obviously you can't eat beef there!

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I live on the East Coast which is great for biking and jogging – something which I couldn't do in India. If you go to Mumbai, you will see that the infrastructure is quite bad - the roads are crazy and full of potholes so it's pretty difficult to go jogging!

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

**Marie-Hélène:** One of my favourite places to eat out is at the East Coast - I go to Jumbo Seafood for the chilli crab and I love Mana Mana. There's also a very nice place by the river at Robertson Quay called Brasserie Wolf, where you can get a good French meal.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** My dream is to grow my business and open branches in other countries.

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## Professional talk ...

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

**Marie-Hélène:** Past Perfect Collection specialises in selling Indian colonial antiques. Our pieces are hand selected from across India and date back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the colonial era was at its peak. We are also developing a colonial styling service, which we hope to launch soon.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I had a long career in the pharmaceutical industry, mainly working in sales and marketing. In Mumbai I was Head of Marketing for a Dutch pharmaceutical company.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** One and a half years.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** The idea for the business was born in Mumbai. My husband and I used to collect antique colonial Indian furniture as a hobby. When our friends said how great our place looked we thought hey, maybe there could be a market for this! We then started thinking about where to set up the business and realised that Singapore offered a great opportunity for us to position ourselves as a niche player.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** The toughest challenge is to build your name. Also, when starting a business your resources are limited. My dream is to display my furniture in a beautiful colonial house but currently I'm renting a small shop which limits how I can display the goods.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I enjoy the fact that I created it! It's great to know I can take an idea from a concept to a successful result and I love the challenge of thinking about how I'm going to grow the business.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** Yes! I'm attending most of the small business group meetings, which I find quite helpful because you meet other people who are in the same boat. I also find the marketing group very interesting and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday meetings are great for networking.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** Well you definitely can't just sit in your shop all day! You have to get out and look at what your competitors are doing. Review your customer base regularly - evaluate your customers and what they are buying and tailor your marketing programme accordingly. Set yourself clear goals and if you're not reaching them, challenge yourself to find out why.

## PrimeTime talk ...

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I got talking to a Dutch lady on a plane who happened to be a PrimeTime member. She recommended PrimeTime to me so I joined pretty much immediately when I arrived in Singapore in 2007.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I subscribe to Marketing, the Small Business Group and WineTime.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** I have volunteered as a membership ambassador for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday meeting meetings.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** PrimeTime is an international network and from a professional point of view the subgroups are really useful.

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

**Marie-Hélène:** The Small Business Group held an excellent meeting on search engine optimisation, which came at exactly the right time for me when I was launching my website.

Thank you Marie-Hélène!