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N² (squared) Consulting

NOTTINGHAM EVENING POST
Starting Out



change improve grow

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N² (squared) - anything is possible

NOTTINGHAM EVENING POST

Starting Out

by Nicola Davis, managing director, N2 (squared) Consulting

The words 'working for free' and 'management consultant' aren't often seen in the same sentence. But I'm determined to prove that good consulting can work as a commercial business, and give something back to the community at the same time. I started my company N2 (squared) Consulting two years ago and work with charities and community networks, helping them improve their operations and help more people in need – as well as supporting clients in the SME, private and public sector.

Using consultants is a new thing for many not-for-profit organisations - but my clients are delighted when I share ideas on how they can build alliances and consortiums to win bigger contracts, create new revenue streams and partner with private companies. It really opens their eyes to how efficient they can become and what they can achieve if they think outside the box.

I found that offering 'pro bono' consulting to charities was a good way for them to try consulting for the first time. How pro bono works is: I start work with the client, we check they have a genuine need for what I can offer them, I introduce them to new business tools and techniques that I think will help them, with proof that they are guaranteed to recoup their investment. Only after this initial 'free' period where a client has agreed that they will recoup their outgoings will I do paid work. I think it's the socially responsible and honest way to do business.

I am Newark born and bred. I spent my early childhood years here with my parents and three sisters and didn't move away until I went to Leeds Metropolitan University to study at eighteen.

I wanted to do a broad degree course that introduced me to different elements of business and chose Business Information Management. I've always disliked the idea of a traditional '9-5' job and consulting seemed like a good place to put my new skills into practice and work on a wide variety of projects.

My 'apprenticeship years' were spent working for two small consulting firms before joining Deloitte – Ben Johnson Hill Associates in Nottingham and the PMI Management Consulting.

I loved really making a difference to a clients' business and developing close relationships. I worked hard, had a little luck and learnt from some great leaders along the way.

I took different experiences away from each of my employers but it was at PMI that I really got the opportunity to make some waves. I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit and they saw that and gave me a role where I could shape new services and product offerings and try some really innovative things with clients. I was just 28 and the only woman on the management team! They showed great faith in me and I hope I returned it.

Deloitte was a different experience altogether. The whole team was very entrepreneurial, groundbreaking and showed a great spirit, and we delivered some really cutting edge stuff to public and private sector clients around the world. They were exciting times – plus I met my husband!

Suddenly there was two of us planning a life together, and as my heart has always lay in small consultancies where you can get really close to the client and make a difference, we thought – why not set up together? N2 (squared) Consulting was born. We're about exemplary consulting. Full stop. And we really want to bring that to the SME market and people that need us most.

N2 (squared) Consulting started in September 2005, and I got pregnant with our baby George a month later... But meticulous as ever, I managed to have him the following summer – very convenient, as it's a quiet time in consulting!

My husband and I try to work a four day week, we have a superb nanny and support network and I try to be home most nights by 6pm to put George to bed, and make sure I don't start work until 10am so I have time with him in the morning. We're just recruiting two new consultants and a PA to join the team to help our growing business. Life is good...and busy!

For more information on N² (squared) Consulting's services and how to get more out of your external consultants, please visit: www.n2-consulting.com or call 0845 3311314 for a no-commitment consultation.



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