



COMPANY TO WATCH: JC SOCIAL MEDIA

Jodie Cook is living up to her title of Birmingham Young Professional of the Year by building on the success of her business – and writing a series of children’s books!

It’s been quite a year for Jodie Cook – and it’s only going to get better for the 25-year-old entrepreneur. The boss of JC Social Media was named Birmingham Young Professional of the Year in May, and she’s followed up that impressive accolade by continuing to see her business boom with more and more big-name clients tapping into her expertise to deliver the right marketing messages to the right audiences.

“It’s been a really busy time, but that’s just how I like it,” said Jodie. “I live and breathe social media and I aim to keep growing the business and win lots more awards. Oh, and I just got married last month too!”

EXPERIENCE EDGE

Jodie set up her company in August 2011, and while three years might sound a short timeframe on which to judge business success it’s a lifetime in the fast-paced world of social media. “We actually have experience on our side,” she said. “Social media has only really been going for seven or eight years and we’ve been in it for half that time – longer than most other marketing businesses. That gives us an edge.”

Based in New Street in the heart of the city, JC Social Media has handled marketing and training for a diverse range of more than 100 national and regional clients since 2011. They include the food industry, public sector including the police, major hotels such as the Marriott group and high profile business initiatives



such as Skills for Birmingham. The world of sport also features with British Athletics ‘running’ to Jodie for help.

Jodie has always had a keen interest in business, coming from a family of entrepreneurs and senior management. Born in Harborne, she attended King Edward VI Five Ways grammar school in Bartley Green before heading to Sheffield University to study business management. “I’ve always loved writing, and my degree taught me a lot about marketing. It wasn’t until I started playing with social media and marketing that I thought: ‘I could do this!’ I did some research, got some ideas together and started networking. My first client after I set up the business was an £800 contract with an advocacy service in Blackpool!”

LOVE OF WRITING

Three years later, JC Social Media has a team of six highly talented people on board. “It’s such a strong team. Passionate about what they do, and really, really creative,” said Jodie. “The most important thing for me when hiring someone is that they can write well and they are creative. I’m not worried about their level of knowledge of social media – I’d rather I trained them in my way of doing things.

“There are three core questions we ask customers before planning a social media campaign – who’s the audience, what’s the message and what business goals do you want to achieve? We then use social media to find that audience. So, for instance, we do a lot in the wedding market so we set out to find as many people as possible who have just got engaged. Then we can interact with them and get our message across.

“We work with clients to ensure we tie in with the brand and voice. That’s very important because the tone of what we do will need to be very different if, say, we are working for someone like the NHS or a burger company.”

ENTREPRENEUR QUEST

Aside from her main business, Jodie is keen to encourage a greater entrepreneurial spirit among Birmingham youth. To help achieve this, she is targeting five to 11-year-olds after co-founding another company called Clever Tykes with her new husband Ben Cook. “Clever Tykes is a series of story books with fun characters who introduce positive entrepreneurial role models to children,” said Jodie. The initiative so impressed Prime Minister David Cameron’s enterprise advisor Lord Young, that he asked to meet Jodie at Downing Street and has featured the books in his Enterprise For All report published last month.

“The figures show that there’s an 80 per cent chance that children are more likely to follow their parents as role models. So if for example there’s a background of unemployment, that’s likely to carry on. I want to see that chain broken and create a wider influx of entrepreneurs. And Clever Tykes is a start in achieving that.” ■