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I loved school. I was an academic student with 10 A to C GCSE's, although my only A grade was in Resistant Materials, unusual for a student that had intentions of being a lawyer. I was the Head of Year Prefect and a keen member of the Gifted & Talented group.

After completing my GCSE's, I left school to study A-Levels at college. In hindsight I would have stayed at 6th form and completing my A-Levels there. There is a huge learning difference between 6th form and college, mainly because you are still treated and coached as young students at 6th form rather being left to your own devices at college. I was studying Business Studies, English and Law A-Levels.

I found myself needing a job. I wanted to learn to drive, I wanted new shoes & clothes. I just wanted more. So I did. My best friend got me a job at Millwall Football Club processing season tickets and memberships through the summer holidays. They were a great bunch to work with. I soon found myself working matchdays too. It was great fun, but I didn't know anything about football.

My small part time job at Millwall just wasn't enough, so I tricked my uncle into giving me a part time job at his plant hire company in East Dulwich. Saturday mornings and Wednesday afternoons once I'd finished at college. He was my first business mentor and I learned so much from him. Everything from stocks & shares, investing in premium bonds, and tactical debt collecting. 18 months later and I received my first tax rebate. I didn't realise I had been paying emergency tax at Millwall during the previous year and I got £380 back. Chuffed to bits, I made my first £200 investment into Premium Bonds.

2003, I failed my first driving test. My driving teacher was shocked, he said my driving was perfect, but I failed on hesitation. I needed more confidence. Second time lucky, nope, failed on hesitation again. 3 tests within 3 months and I passed 3rd time. Freedom at last and day two of holding my licence I was straight on the M25 and down to Hastings to go camping for the weekend.

2004 was my life changing year. Millwall was in the FA Cup final and everyone was excited. I was doing overtime, and life was fun. I was watching more football matches than I ever dreamt possible and I was become more familiar with the Corporate Sponsors for the club. August 2004 and one of the sponsors offered me an interview with his company TAG Transport Services in Croydon. I had been to Croydon a couple of times, and it was miles away, not that it mattered now that I was driving.

I had a chat with my dad about it and he drew me a map so I didn't get lost on my way to the interview. I got the job as PA to the Directors. They had 12 trucks all 26t and 44t artics. My mum kept calling them juggernauts, which I found really annoying. Invoices, payments, handling calls and meetings, liaising with clients. I was being given more and more responsibility and they challenged me. But I found myself saying yes to things I didn't have a clue about, but I'd use the AOL search to point me in the right direction.

I was still lacking confidence though. I went to an Ann Summers party and the rep tried recruiting me, but I definitely wasn't confident enough for that! And then there was the Virgin Vie Make-Up party. I love make-up and dressing up. So I joined, I thought it would be a good way to meet different people and get talking to new people. I had so much fun here and trained to be a bridal make-up artist. I also went on to buy myself a brand new car. It was a Peugeot 206 with a private plate KP05 KEE.

In 2006, the Directors of TAG Transport Services decided it was time to change the direction of the business. They were predominantly into Newspaper distribution and the local papers were beginning to feel the effects of online advertising. The newspapers were getting thinner, the property sections were pulled, and leaflet advertising for insertion was at its lowest.

After talking to fellow hauliers, an opening into the Palletforce Pallet Network for the KT postcode was available and a contract was signed in January 2007. The Directors decided I would front the office and calls. I'm sure it was because they didn't have a clue about computers and wanted to stretch resource.

So, at the age of 21, I was the Ops manager & PA to the Directors. I was now talking to 80 ish members across the UK and creating routes for the 3 drivers. We recruited a Sales Manager that performed well really quickly. The time came for us to recruit in the office to support me and look after all the new customers. We found a back to work mum called Kelly. She was fab and fitted in really quickly working 10-2 every day.

It was at this point that I left Virgin Vie because I didn't have enough "me" time. Probably for the best because I wanted to buy everything Virgin Vie had to offer in their home catalogue! But I went away with more confidence in meeting new people and happy that sales was more about believing in the product you were offering.

I had the most challenging task of all – I had to co-ordinate moving the company to new premises. The landlord had put the rent up by £80k a year so it was time to move. We had 4 weeks notice. It was a successful move and we were settling into our new premises. Unfortunately there was a corporate rift and the 2 Directors parted company. It was a sad time.

We soon got a visit from a Palletways rep offering us the CR & SM areas. It was the best commercial decision for the company. We could increase delivery revenue and cut distribution costs. We signed a 10 year deal in 2011. This is when I met one of the most influential people in my life, Maggie Williamson. She was nicknamed the General and an absolute ball buster! She came to train us on the Palletways systems and there wasn't anything she wouldn't put her hand too. She would jump on the fork trucks and unload the double deckers, put drivers in their place, and I adored her. I still do actually! I would have balls like her one day!

This year found us moving premises again. We were sub-letting from a retail unit and they needed the space back. This time it was easy.

Kelly decided it was time for her to leave. She'd had a few emotional challenges at home and that was where she needed to be. So I had to find her a replacement, it was hard because Kelly had progressed into a full time role and had grown with me and the business. I was gutted to lose her and still often wonder if there was anything more I could have done to support her. My sister and my mum worked for us for a short while, but that had its' own set of challenges!

I was in the hairdressers one day, and a saucy young lady called Aylish, convinced me to chop my hair off and dye it blonde. She had a little bite about her and I decided that was exactly what I needed in my team. She was 18 and hired and is still one of my best key members of staff.

The recession was taking its toll on the haulage industry and companies were undercutting vigorously and it was painful. January 2013 see TAG Transport Services placed into administration. The Director decided he needed to downsize and move away from the overnight pallet sector.

Geoff Phipps, owner of TAG Transport Services, was and is undoubtedly the best and worst teachers in my career. He taught me most of what I know about the haulage industry and is still a key part of my life. He would give me the reins to go forward, but question my decisions from every angle. The one thing that I learned best was that if you make a mistake, there will always be a financial consequence, but use that as the cost of an education rather than regretting the choice you made.

I value the way he taught me to cross question my plans and disparage my own decisions. It makes me aware of what could go wrong before it does and how best to be prepared if it does.

I went to my parents home on the Friday evening and I had a plan. If they could lend me up to the equity I had in my home then I would form my own company. They thought I was mad but believed in me. I spoke to Palletways on Monday morning and they supported my venture.

The 2 week administration period was tough. The Administrators needed to get the best and highest price for the creditors, I needed to get the lowest and most viable price for me to get the ball rolling. I was introduced to a lady called Stephanie who soon became my solicitor. She was fantastic at pushing me in forward with what I thought was unrealistic terms and yet there was a deal to be had.

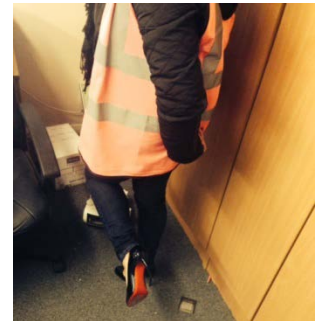


18th January 2013 was the start of Diamond Distribution Ltd. Rhianna was in the charts with "Diamonds" and it made sense that my company would shine bright like a diamond. We hit the ground running and it truly was the bravest decision I have ever had to make. I was 27 with only 8 years experience in the haulage industry. But I felt that it was what I knew best and the most logical path to take.

The first few months were more difficult than I could describe because I was tarnished with the stigma of coming from a failing company. The haulage magazines were plastering my name as if I was blame factor for the Administration of TAG Transport Services. The landlord wanted me out of the building but I stood my ground, it was quite apparent that I wasn't going to find anywhere in Croydon big enough to house a haulage company. Again and again, I found no one wanted to give a new business a chance. I made a lot of noise and insisted that the landlord visit the depot and talk about the opportunity properly. They gave me 2 years because he was impressed how a little thing like me could manage a big company like this. So rude!

My first essential task was to pass my Transport Manager CPC exam and get my name on the Operators Licence. I didn't want to be reliant on a transport manager and not know the rules & regulations completely. I was so determined and after 3 months of home study I sat the exam in December. January couldn't come soon enough for the results and I passed first time.

The company was profitable in its first year and I was so proud. In all honesty, the first 2 years flew by and profits were up in the second year. So I treated myself to a pair of Louboutins. Black patent pumps with a 4 inch heel – I tracked them all the way from Milan. When they arrived 2 weeks later I just couldn't wait to put them on. Unfortunately, they didn't complement my pink hi-vis



Time to invest in the trucks, I bought 2 second hand Daf's and I couldn't wait to get them sign written, but I didn't know design I wanted. Maybe feature trucks with Marilyn Monroe or Jessica Rabbit. However, long discussions with my team and the drivers decided on no pink dots or ladybird patterns, so I sent my ideas off to Sigttek and they came back with a fantastic design. I finally had my brand being promoted. It felt really good.

Now, 4 years later I'm more than proud of what I've achieved. The hardest part of everything that I've done was getting male chauvinist oldies to take me seriously. I'm now 31 and operating a fleet of 14 vehicles. I have an all female office, this was unintentional and just happened that way. My Ops Manager is 23, her assistant is 20. My Accounts Manager is my younger sister Sophie, 25.

Sophie kind of fell into the role after working at Charles Gee Hauliers who also went through an Administration and liquidation process. She wanted her own wings and didn't want to be in her sisters footsteps, so we agreed she would come and work for me until she found another job. 3 years later and I wouldn't be without her. She causes me undue stress sometimes, but the bond we have is irreplaceable. She pulls me up on my weaker days when bad goes to worse.

So, all my office staff are all female and 25 or under, and believe it or not they make me feel old at 31! We break all the haulage statistics for the females in a man's world. Sadly, I only have one female driver who is currently on maternity leave. I now have my hgv provisional and I intend to take my test this year.

Last year was a tough trading year, profits were down and morale was low. So this year things will be different. I've got my fight back, my sales head on, and I'm going to drive my business forward...literally!

