

“Best thing you can do to differentiate your CV from everyone else is by doing exceptional things”

Introduction

I work at River Cottage - a more than profit organisation set up by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall in 1998, communicating his SLOW food ethos through his own Channel 4 programme. River Cottage now operates four restaurants, a Chefs School, a consultancy department and runs cookery courses and events from its HQ in Axminster. I work on a variety of communication projects in three areas; education, professional courses, and consultancy. I'm one of those annoyingly positive people as I feel incredibly lucky that my job allows me to do what I love. I'm in a position to make a real difference, whether that's turning around the lives of young disadvantaged people, who didn't think they would ever have meaningful careers, supporting charities, training professional chefs and making them consider about a more sustainable approach to their menu, or even just talking about sustainable food and reducing waste. Ultimately, my job centres around food in one way or another, which is handy because it's all I think about; the term 'foodie' doesn't cut the mustard. That's why the most delicious part of my job is supporting our consultancy projects with a communications plan. River Cottage work with restaurants to create mouth-watering dishes using the best quality produce and I get to tell everyone about it; it's a match made in heaven!



Image: Harry Wild, Communications, Education and Partnerships – River Cottage

How did you get started in your career?

I studied business studies and creative writing at university, then went on to do a Chartered Institute of Marketing Professional Diploma. Unlocking Cornish Potential enabled me to return to Cornwall, where I secured my first graduate job in marketing. I then specialised in digital marketing at the Eden Project. I left after three years to work for Michelin starred chef, Paul Ainsworth, as his PR Director. As a foodie myself, I couldn't have worked for a better business – he's an incredible chef and works so hard to reach perfection within the hospitality industry.

Can you outline a typical work day?

One of the things I love most about my job is how varied it is. No two days are the same. I could be doing anything from planning a restaurant press launch event, to interviewing our apprentices here at Park Farm. One moment I'm writing social media messages in a colloquial tone, but then I'll need to adopt an academic writing style for a consultancy proposal. It's the sort of job where you don't ever really stop working, but I feel incredibly lucky to have a job that I love and wouldn't have it any other way.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

We're driven by our ethical values at River Cottage, so you often hear the words 'well, it's just the *right* thing to do' floating around. It feels good to know that we're fighting the good fight. I love the fact that my role contributes to making a positive change in the hospitality industry, which is a fantastic feeling.

What skills are important for anyone wishing to start in your profession?

I'd strongly recommend having a good grasp of digital technology for marketing. I think that a sound knowledge of SEO, social media platforms and how to stimulate user-gen content can be the most effective way to engage with your audience, compared to traditional marketing. A sharp eye for proof-reading also goes a long way.

What main personal attributes do you think is important for your type of job?

Assertiveness is a very useful personal quality to have in communications. That belief that 'if you don't ask, you don't get' is the best way to stimulate your own luck and enable you to get what you want.

Do you have any tips or suggestions on how young people and adults can enter your industry?

To get into food communications you should perhaps consider a blend of Business and English qualifications. I'd then recommend deciding who you admire and where you'd like to work – and then asking them for help. Offer your skills for free if necessary to get your foot in the door. Use social media to continually engage with employees of your aspired companies so you get yourself on their radar.

Why is it important for your sector to attract and train young people and new entrants?

The hospitality sector is ranked fourth in the UK for economic value, and our food culture has a world-wide reputation, so this is a great industry to get into with plenty of scope for career progression. This industry is also rapidly growing, so we're always on the lookout to recruit talented new people.

General words of wisdom

The best thing you can do to differentiate your CV from everyone else is by doing exceptional things with your spare time. Get involved with local politics, throw street parties, work with charities, become a Director in a group you have an interest in, raise money for something – show that you can handle a project and you're a doing person. This will be sure to get you noticed.

Further contact/information

Further information on River Cottage and their Young Apprentice Chef School can be found at www.rivercottage.net

If you are inspired by Harry and would like to get in touch with her, please email inspiringsouthwestncs@prospects.co.uk with your enquiry and we will pass on your contact details.