

New family business takes a bow

Jo Harris has spent the last 16 years in the charity sector, and the last eight working as fundraising manager for the Evening Chronicle Sunshine Fund. When the chance came up to go into business with daughter Charlotte and husband Chris, Jo jumped at the chance. Together they combine Jo's many years of event management, Charlotte's event experience with The Prince's Trust and degree in multi media textile design, and her husband's vast PR and business background: it was an opportunity not to be missed!

You have recently taken over two franchises in the North East. What attracted you to work with Simply Bows and Chair Covers?

Having been in the charity world running high-profile events, Charlotte and I had used Simply Bows and Chair Covers on a number of occasions. I realised what a high-quality product they were offering, as well as having an ethos of an exceptional standard of service and customer care. There was a good match between the way we both ran things. So when the opportunity came along to purchase a franchise I jumped at the chance; in fact, I jumped twice and bought two franchises!

What's it like running a business with your daughter?

Charlotte runs the Newcastle territory while I look after North Northumberland. Over the years she has helped me run many of my events and she also worked as sports and events manager at The Prince's Trust, gaining a lot of experience in event management. I knew that she and I work the same way and running a business together would be no problem. My husband, Chris, also gets involved – so it's a real family affair.

"We have vast knowledge of suppliers in the North East so can point our clients in any direction they need" - Jo Harris

Is it easy for the pair of you to switch by to 'family mode' after work?

It is easy to switch off. Charlotte has her own apartment, so we are not living in each other's pockets.

What areas are you covering?

The two franchise areas that Charlotte and I look after are Northumberland, up to the Scottish Border and the whole of Newcastle city centre and North Tyneside. Simply Bows and Chair Covers now has five franchise offices in the North East, covering Durham and Darlington, Sunderland and Hartlepool and West Northumberland and Cumbria.

What kind of events do you cater for?

At the moment our core business is weddings, corporate events, charity balls and private party celebrations. We have consultations with the clients to meet their needs. Brides come to our home-based offices for a private consultation to choose their chair covers and sashes to match their colour



Jo and Charlotte Harris, of Simply Bows and Chair Covers.

schemes. We work with the ideas that our clients have, or give them inspiration when they are lacking ideas, to create a unique look at their event. If the bride needs further help we can also advise them with choice of venues, florists, stationery, live music and photography.

We have an ethos of an exceptional standard of service and customer care. We like to think that if we can't provide the service then we know someone who can.

Are you planning to expand into other arenas (i.e conference, business functions etc).

We are building new relationships all the time and would like to expand our services in the corporate field.

What's has been the response from customers so far?

The response from customers, wedding planners and local venues has been tremendous. I knew when I bought into the company that the product was of high quality – so it has been very easy to attract customers who want a high standard of service.

Contact details:

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