



# SECRET TO SUCCESS

Helen Sanderson Walker goes to meet a successful business woman to find out what makes her tick



She laughs and replies: “I do. I just roll my sleeves up and get on with it. I have always been incredibly ambitious and driven. I have never taken no for an answer and I don’t see barriers, just challenges. My husband, Matthew is sales director in the business and between us we juggle family life. When I had my son I had a caesarean on the Friday and I was back in the office with my new baby in tow on the Monday.”

A quick internet search on Janet Thornton, managing director of Inspired Energy PLC will throw up pages of articles about the strength of her business and the journey of a one-woman-band to a public company in just over 10 years, not to mention the numerous accolades declaring her business woman of the year. But who is the real Janet Thornton? With long, jet black hair, bright red lipstick and killer heels, this woman’s whole persona means business... yet as I sit down to coffee she welcomes me with an enormous smile. You can’t help but like her.

Even in 2016, when we may be on the verge of seeing the first female President of the United States, very few men have even come close to achieving the business success that Janet Thornton has achieved. I know from my research that Janet is a mum to three children and a wife to Matthew; as well as managing director of a multi-million pound business.

As I sit in awe I have to ask her: “How do you do it?”

“ PROVIDING INFORMATION AND BALANCING RISK MAKE IT A FASCINATING JOB ”

“My mum has always helped me with the children. It’s because of her that the business has grown up in Kirkham. When I was pregnant, my mum said she would gladly help out with childcare but I would have to move home. She couldn’t travel up and down to Cheshire. So we relocated the business to Kirkham and we have never looked back.”

Inspired Energy is a consultancy providing a range of services to help businesses manage their electricity and gas costs. Janet’s team negotiates with energy companies such as British Gas and Npower to provide clients with the most cost-effective energy contracts. The company also provides energy audits, market analysis, energy management and advice on renewable energy products.

Janet set the business up in 2000 after becoming disenchanted



with working in big consultancies, as she felt they had sacrificed customer service for profit. She knew she could do better.

“ I EXPECT ALL MY TEAM TO WORK VERY HARD BUT WITH THAT I WANT THEM TO PLAY HARD TOO AND LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES ”

“The deregulation of the power supply industry meant I was able to work with some of the biggest consultancies in the business. It’s a job I love and no two days are the same. Providing information and balancing risk make it a fascinating job. It’s an industry where gas, for instance, can be bought and sold 50 times before it reaches the user. I love working with businesses to improve their balance sheets.

“I decided to take the plunge and with some financial sacrifice I set the business up from home. It was only when I was approached by another company wanting

to take over Inspired Energy that I realised the value of what Matthew and I and the rest of the team had created.”

“It was then that I knew that I wanted to float the company. It was the most gruelling yet exciting 12 months of our lives which culminated in 2011 with us

floating the company on AIM, the Stock Exchanges market for growing companies. It was a resounding success with the business being valued at well over £10million.”

The business has continued to go from strength to strength with a number of acquisitions

that have proved complementary to the business by increasing the breadth of the target customer base, while enhancing the sector specialism to now include leisure, logistics and the public sector.

Just as Janet Thornton is no ordinary business woman, her company InspiRED is no ordinary business. A quick tour of the head office resembles something from Google rather than a business in Lancashire. For starters there is a full gym and fitness studio, a hair and beauty salon as well as a restaurant!

“I expect all my team to work very hard but with that I want them to play hard too and look after themselves. The gym is home to two of Lancashire’s professional boxers who train daily in the Inspired facilities. How could you not be inspired to get fit and healthy when you see them every day?” ■

