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Q&A WITH ELITE EVENT ENTERTAINMENT PLANNER CEO CHANTELE FRASER: 'HIGH PROFILE CLIENTS LOVE CONFIDENCE'



If you're wondering how to snag A-list, luxury clients, take cues from the CEO and Founder of Flawless Entertainment & Promotions **Chantelle Fraser**.

Her pride and joy is the premier NYC talent booking agency she built by stellar word-of-mouth marketing, specializing in niche image-based casting to help brands and private clients make events memorable. For example, she once had to find models fluent in Mongolian for a private NYC event thrown for a Mongolian Ambassador – and by tracking down beauties via the Mongolian version of the Miss America pageant, she succeeded in hiring a gorgeous Mongolian staff.

Another time, Fraser had to find rock violinists to play at events all around the country. This UK-born beauty and successful entrepreneur is constantly called upon by Wall Street bankers, high society Manhattanites, and luxury brands including YSL and BMW to bring beauty, modern entertainment and rhythm to their events. And, in between booking 50 to 100 events per month, she took some time to chat with me about how the heck she does it all.

Q: When and why did you move from the UK to the US?

A: It's a funny story, how I got to the US! It was a combination of being in the right place at the right time, with the right people, and a high level of shamelessness! I was 22 years old and had just graduated from the London School of Economics. I did not want to take the corporate route. I wanted to work in the entertainment industry, which I figured was all about networking to get a foot in the door.

So, I decided to get a waitressing job at a posh new private members club in the UK. It was jam packed with celebrities and rock legends. Over time I established strong rapports with many of the members, who were very helpful with offering me internships and opportunities. One of my contacts at the club was also Alumni from the London School of Economics. He was moving to the USA to conduct business. I gave him my resume, and asked if he needed an executive assistant in the states. He said he liked my "charm offensive" and gave me the gig!

Q: Did you always dream of doing this professionally?

A: I remember washing my uncle's car when I was 8 years old, and he gave me 5 pounds for a job well done. That was my very first entrepreneurial "aha" moment! I washed a lot of cars that summer... In terms of Flawless, I had my "aha" moment while working as a model agent for a high fashion modeling agency. Clients would call wanting to book models for promotional events. They had good clients, and were reputable luxury brands. We were forced to turn a lot of those jobs down because it was not perceived as beneficial for the models' careers. At the same time I knew a lot of the models were doing side jobs as waitresses and hostesses to make ends meet, because modeling work can be unstable. So I thought, "Aha, why not launch a new type of company – a "temp" agency for Models?"

The business would be hybrid platform, giving models an additional outlet to showcase their skills and personality, beyond the traditional "pout and pose" work, and provide clients and brands a means to elevate their brand image by leveraging the power of beauty. We would literally bring beauty to business! Thus, Flawless was born.

Q: What's the most difficult part about your job (besides the unbelievable requests you receive from clients and are able to pull off) that may surprise people?

A: The most difficult part of my job has nothing to do with my actual business, per se. I feel like I was born to do this job – it is very natural for me. I have a great eye for talent, and expect exceptional

results from my staff and my talent. I find the most challenging part is the day to day running of a business – all the business processes, and being an effective manager for my team.

My business is very organic because I often find myself in situations that I have never been in before, and that I really have no experience with. At this point, I trust my core skills, and educate myself constantly, so I evolve at the same pace as my business.

Q: What has been your biggest “make-it-work-moment”?

A: During Hurricane Sandy, we have no electricity in the office, and no one had electricity at home. We had one day to book models and DJs for over 50 events nationwide. We set up shop at the W Hotel and even held model casting calls from there. One of our employees worked from his car for two days, with his iPhone plugged into the car charger, because his street was completely barricaded off. We definitely “made-it-work!”

Q: Do you have any crazy stories, in which the proverbial monkey wrench was thrown into the situation?

A: Hurricane Sandy was a pretty big monkey wrench! We had so many exciting events in New York City booked that week. We had worked especially hard on a casting for event models and aerial artists for one of my favorite Grammy winning recording artists. Due to the storm, it obviously got cancelled – we were gutted!

Q: Any embarrassing work moments you can share, even if it was an awkward interviewee working for you?

A: Early on in my business, I made some rookie mistakes! We were staffing models for a Super Bowl event in Miami, and 30 minutes before the event, a model had to drop out of the event. We had no one to replace her, and it was a really big client. A friend said they know a beautiful model to replace her with. In desperation, we booked her from her photograph, and had her come straight to the event.

To our dismay, she looked NOTHING like her pictures – it was the modeling equivalent of a wildly outdated online dating profile photo! It was so embarrassing, and the client went nuts. I was given the awkward task of having to fire her on the spot. Luckily, I could blame it on her not being able to fit into the clothes (which was true). Phew!

What are your best tips on getting your first high-profile/high-end client?

My best tips on breaking into the high-end market come down to three things: Be confident, strive for excellence, and be resourceful!

Be confident: High profile clients love confidence. It makes them feel secure. The moment you show fear, intimidation, or that you don’t belong, it’s over. They have a sixth sense for that type of thing! Have no shame, and no fear. Remember – you are as good as anyone else!

Strive for excellence: You are the chief ambassador for your brand. If you want to attract the high-end market, you need to look and act the part. Work on being the best version of yourself that you can be. Practice good grammar, with the proper intonations. Be conscious of your image – wear nice quality clothing, keep physically fit, and work on your social intelligence. A lot of business is based on “feeling.” If the client gets a good feeling about you, you’ve already won half the battle.

Also, people like to do business with people who they can connect and identify with. Do this by emulating your clientele, and by adding your own unique selling point. This could be anything from your witty sense of humor, your unique product, your killer dress sense, to an interesting hobby.

Be resourceful: Exercise strategic networking. Go where your dream clients go. If your focus is finding high profile clients, you should aim to be in their space as much as possible. Good places to check out are charity events, luxury goods conventions (ie: boating shows, classic car conventions, industry business conferences). All it takes is that one person to set things off!

Q: I can only imagine that you've had your fair share of difficult clients. Have you ever had to fire a client? If so, how do you know when you should?

A: My clients are the people who keep us in business – I would never fire a client. I am grateful to have clients, no matter how difficult they are. I do, however, fire talent. If anyone is not representing our brand or our client's brand in a flawless way (ie: tardiness, sloppiness, bad habits, like chewing gum, using a cell phone on the job, bad language, drinking, etc.), I take action. Anyone who jeopardizes the reputation of our clients has to be cut loose.

Q: What's your best advice on keeping clients on track and satisfied without overpromising?

A: I am in the business of "YES!" For the most part, I always love a challenge. We go above and beyond to make sure our clients are satisfied. It helps us to evolve and push our boundaries. We don't believe in being "reasonable." Where there is a will, there is a way!

Most problems arise when clients have champagne tastes with beer budgets! That's when negotiations begin. The best strategy I have found is to provide a reason why it benefits them to consider other options. People ultimately want to know, *what's in it for me and my brand?* And, two: prove it. It's one thing to say something, but can you back it up?

Q: With all of the parties you're behind, would people be surprised to find out that you actually prefer mellow nights when you have time for yourself?

A: Looking back, I think my life has gone through a series of phases. In my 20's, I lived for the party! Now, I am in my early 30s. I am much more into my wellbeing and self development. I go to bars and restaurants a few nights a week. I also play golf once or twice a week (with weekly lessons in the winter).

I ride horses in the summer, do an early evening run, with my little dog, Milkshake, a few times a week, read a lot of business books, watch my *Real Housewives* shows, and entertain friends at my apartment.

I am pretty social, so I love having people around. That being said, I probably prefer a more mellow night than I used to.

Q: What do you think has helped you in your career most?

A: I've succeeded in my career thanks to having a strong network, and being super resourceful and very detail oriented. I have high standards for myself and my team, and I am not ashamed of it. We are constantly refining with, "*What can we do better,*" and "*Is this the best we can do?*" My mantra for life and success is to work on being the best version of yourself that you can be. I conduct my business with the same approach.

Q: What book (business or pleasure) do you think every woman should read:

A: Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell

Q: Do you have a mentor? Or, are you motivated/inspired by any other female entrepreneurs?

A: I am endlessly inspired by Madam CJ Walker, a pioneer for female entrepreneurs – she made her fortune in cosmetics, over a century ago. She is cited in The Guinness Book of World Records as the “First Self-made Female Millionaire, Black or White in America.” She was an African American woman, daughter of an ex-slave, living in extreme poverty, with no education. She dared to be unreasonable, to live her dream, by pushing the boundaries, transcending the expectations of her race and sex to make what seem to be impossible *possible*. She was an outlier. Her remarkable story is my biggest motivator for success.

Q: What is the one essential trait that you believe all women entrepreneurs must have to be successful?

A: Be fearless. Fear is the number one saboteur of success. Fear renders us powerless, and limits us from living up to our true potential.

Q: Lastly, the thing that every woman wants to know, have you ever cried at work or in the office due to frustration?

A: No, I have not cried in my office. As an entrepreneur, you are faced with challenges all the time. I don't feel the need to cry about them – it's part of the process. I have had so many ups and downs, that I have developed a pretty thick skin. To be honest, what do we really have to cry about? We are living in abundance in the free world! I always have an attitude of gratitude. Work should not make you cry ladies! Toughen up – you are the “captain of the ship,” unless this is the precedent you want to set within your office.

Q: What piece of technology that you didn't have when you started your business, but that you now can't imagine living/working without

A: The one piece of technology that I didn't have when I started my business, but that I can't imagine living or working without is my iPhone, of course! I swipe credit cards with it, pay contractor bills on it, read books on it, fact check on it, send emails, scan documents, and even fax from it. A must-have!