

Evening Echo



My dream job at city's five star hotel

IMAGINE being in the enviable position of being employed in the only place in Cork you truly wanted to work.

Well, that's the case for Karen Fleming, a Sales and Marketing Manager, at the Hayfield Manor.

After several years studying and working away from her home city, she literally walked in the door of the five star city hotel in 2010 and asked for a job. She must have given a very impressive spiel, because in the ultimate vote of confidence, a role as Breakfast Supervisor was created for her, despite the fact the hotel wasn't actively recruiting at the time.

"I was coming home to do a Masters in UCC and I knew about the hotel. My cousin used to work there as a trainee chef and it was on my radar as it had a very good reputation," she explains.

It turns out that Hayfield Manor's gamble on Karen paid dividends, as not only did she come top of her class in her Masters in Management and Marketing (scoring a 1.1 and receiving a crystal bowl from the university to mark her achievement) she also rose through the ranks at the hotel, becoming Assistant Restaurant Manager, Operations Manager and Assistant Manager before settling in her current role two and a half years ago.

"They are very good to promote. Once you have invested in the hotel, they invest in you", she says.

The Waterfall native had done her ground work long before she set her sights on Hayfield Manor, having studied for an Honours Degree in Hotel and Catering Management from GMIT and worked in hospitality in both Galway and Germany, the latter for the best part of eight years.

It was at the time she elevated to her current position that she became a **Network Cork** member and last year she joined the committee as Corporate Membership Officer.

"It's given me great confidence in network-

ing and building relationships here in Cork. It's been a great opportunity to get to know other female business women, especially as I was away from Cork for a long time."

Her contribution was recognised when she was awarded Businesswoman of the Year – Employee, at the **Network Cork** Awards, this summer, an accolade that took her by surprise: "I was very, very shocked actually. When the shock wore off I was absolutely thrilled. I was very pleased afterwards to see how many people congratulated me, sent e-mails and cards. I felt very loved! It's a very warm business community in Cork."

Her integration with Cork's business leaders doesn't stop there either, as she is the hotel's representative for Cork Chamber and the American Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Marketing Institute and a member of the Sales Institute. With all that extracurricular activity, it sounds like she is in work mode 24 hours a day: "I will admit to, yes, taking the job home with me", she laughs.

"I'm in a fortunate position that I have a supportive family and partner who understand how much my work means to me. The business is open 24 hours and I'd prefer that people could contact me if they need to."

Time, she says, is the biggest challenge in her job: "You never seem to have enough time to do everything you want to do. There is enough there to keep you going 24 hours a day, making sure you get back to people and being proactive as well as reactive, creating new markets. I'm now actively promoting Cork as a destination internationally and nationally, and as a Corkonian it's great to be promoting my home place."

Clearly a hard worker, Karen is unhesitant when declaring what she perceives to be the best part of her job: "Making people happy is the best part; making their experience the best it can be. I get to work in a place I'm very proud of, with an exceptional team."

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NOMINEES: Karen Flemming left, with Naomi Fein and Noeleen Cronin, winners of the **Network Cork** Annual Awards, who go forward to the Network Ireland Awards this month. **Picture:** Darragh Kane.