

CAREER PATHWAY TO CHANNEL DIRECTOR

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Since looking after the Sales, Marketing and Communications Portfolio for Crescent Consulting, I have been really fortunate to have met some incredible people. Nicole Earnshaw is one of them. Nicole is the Channel Director for one of Christchurch's best Media & PR agencies, Harvey Cameron.

Nicole has a wealth of knowledge when it comes to the industry. We ended up chatting for ages as I picked her brain on all sorts of marketing topics: what does the Christchurch market look like, what's it like to be working in the industry and what does it take to be successful in it.

Nicole's global-level awards and her current involvement as a Judge at the New Zealand Media Awards is a true testament to her passion, work ethic, and achievements.

I loved hearing Nicole's story and I felt truly inspired by her journey. I appreciated her honesty when it came to the reality of the industry: ***"if change and risk scare you this won't be the industry for you."***



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Who is Nicole Earnshaw?

I grew up in Auckland, New Zealand. I lived both East and West sides of the city. If I had to identify which side feels more like home, I'd say West where I spent most of my young adult life. I made the move to the South Island two and a half years ago and I now proudly call Christchurch home.

I got the travel bug at a young age (16) when I travelled to Europe staying with family in England and family friends in France. I look back in deep fondness now but at the time I really didn't appreciate it the way I should have. Typical teenager.

At 21 I won an Intrepid Journey to Thailand which was a phenomenal, authentic experience. Guest-stays with local families threw me right into the Thai way of life, such as bucket showers, sleeping on hut floors, traditional meals, rice whisky, music, dance, weaving etc... It was my first solo adventure overseas and I loved it!

Since then, I've explored numerous countries: Australia, New Caledonia, Fiji, Bali, Cambodia, Vietnam and yes, I've been back to Thailand too.

What did you want to be when you were little?

At four I wanted to be a ballerina. At seven I wanted to be an author. I've always been very passionate about both dancing and writing. They are both forms of self-expression and are extremely cathartic but they can also bring other people joy. And this has really become a theme for my life. I am a people person and I keep a human lens on everything I do in my life and in my job.

When you were studying, what did you envision for yourself and your career?

How does it compare to what you do now?

I'll be honest, in my first year of University I had no idea what I wanted to do for a career. I was focused on absorbing as much information as possible and enjoying newfound freedoms around learning. I did an array of subjects as part of my degree, such as history, anthropology, dance, English and film.

About halfway through year two is when I started to think more seriously about where my degree could take me. I had just completed a sports journalism paper and some creative writing papers and decided I would try my hand at becoming a writer for a magazine or newspaper when I graduated. I proactively approached companies with snippets of my writing and expressions of interest for work but all I got back were kind rejection letters saying they weren't hiring as well as a few offers of casual contract work.

I was after a full and regular pay packet, so I went to a media and communications recruitment agency for help. They had a lot of advertising sales roles going so I did a few interviews and then had companies fighting over me. It felt awesome to have my talents recognised and it was exciting to 'get my foot in the door' of a vibrant and creative industry. I decided to accept the job as Advertising Coordinator at Prime TV. I loved that job. I was so hungry to learn anything and everything and it was a super fun and supportive team of people.

The job itself was at the pointy end of what we do in Media but a crucial part of the puzzle, nonetheless. Very implementation heavy focused purely on booking ad space for one medium (TV) and one network (Prime). A huge part of the job was fostering strong working relationships with clients, who were media planners and buyers at advertising agencies and I thrived in this space. I worked hard at every aspect of that job to prove my worth - I was determined to climb the corporate ladder!

I moved through a few other Ad Sales jobs working for Sky TV, TVNZ and ACP Magazines before making the leap to work in Media for an Advertising Agency (FCB). In our industry we joke about Ad Sales being the "dark side" and typically people transition in the reverse order from Media Agency to Supplier (Ad Sales), so I bucked the trend and headed for the light side hahaha

I have been working Agency-side in Media for 13 years having worked my way up from Buyer through Planner and Manager to Director. I've worked across a multitude of clients from Retail to Brand including Mitre 10, Noel Leeming, L'Oréal, Woolworths, BMW, Ministries of Social Development and Education to name but a few.

My current role as a Media (Channel) Director at Harvey Cameron is at the top-end of what we do. I manage a team of planners and buyers across 20 advertisers, leading strategic communications planning, brand development and major supplier negotiations as well as acting as a senior consult on the day-to-day operation of each account.

In your terms, how do you define Media?

People tend not to understand what we do in Media. A media career is hugely diverse and we get to stretch both sides of our brains; on the one hand being deeply analytical and on the other being very creative. I always joke about us wearing many hats because you can be running an event to launch a new brand to market one day, then analysing media consumption trends across generations the next.

In Media we work closely with Marketing teams from various companies to understand their business needs, and through that to identify the core target audience in order to advise them on what media channels to invest in and the allocation of said budget to get them the best return on investment (ROI). Whether it be to drive sales of a product or service, to create consumer behaviour change, or to shift perceptions on a brand, product, national issue/statistic.

We are also responsible for the placement of the advertising so external relationships with both local and sometimes global media suppliers is a key part of our job.

We are knowledgeable about ad capabilities and formats across all media channels such as Cinema, TV, Radio, Out-of-Home, Print, Digital and Social.

We have strong negotiation skills and tactics to provide our clients with great value across all ad placements and we manage everything right down to the instruction and delivery of the artwork. Heck we often come up with the creative concepts for the artwork itself!

We are problem solvers; we are communicators but underpinning all that we do is the study of people. We understand humans: what they think, how they feel, what they do, how they do it and when they do it.

It's such a fun industry to work in because Media is forever changing. Advancements in technology have forced a lot of change; the world is now more fragmented than ever and the fight for consumer attention has never been so challenging. Therefore, Media and Communication specialists/experts have never been so needed.

Why Media? What do you love about it? What is driving you at the moment?

I'm motivated by many aspects of my job – the fast pace, the constant change, the challenges, the research/data, the creative thinking and of course the actual client work (the campaigns). As a Director of a team, I am really passionate about the people and nurturing emerging talent. I invest heavily in training my team – I love taking the time to draw out the best in someone and watch them spread their wings and fly. I learn so much from the younger generation and I have just as much respect for them as I do for those who have been in the industry for 40 years. Their view on the world is so different, but I appreciate those differences. Knowledge comes in all forms.

What are your Career highlights?

I've been fortunate to win a number of media awards throughout my career, but the highlight was winning a Gold Media Lions at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity for Ministry of Social Development: "Not Ok in Any Home". These awards are incredibly rare at a global level, so this was a huge moment of recognition and I was immensely proud. I'm sure the yacht parties in France were going off that night but the champagne was popping all day for us in lil ole NZ!

I get equally as excited with the small wins, such as working hard to get a recommendation across the line with a client and them finally saying "yes". And I love being invited to judge the New Zealand Media awards each year – it is a real honour.

How do you maintain work-life balance?

I wasn't always so good at maintaining work: life balance. I've had to learn the hard way, unfortunately. Our industry is incredibly demanding, so it is easy to fall into the trap of working non-stop around the clock and not taking proper care of yourself. Burnout is a real problem. The way I manage this is by upholding boundaries and promises I've created for myself. Boundaries such as not checking or responding to emails once I've left the office or saying "no" to work events that fall outside work hours. Promises such as exercising most days which helps me with mental processing and managing stress levels, or taking a lunch break away from my desk at least once a week. Simple, small things can make a huge difference.

What has changed in Media since you started your career?

From a general business perspective in the last few years, I've witnessed a shift from what an individual can offer a company to what a company can now offer an individual. This is being driven by the younger generation having the confidence to challenge traditional corporate constructs in order to create a work environment that aligns with their core values. This is opening up discussions to many things such as well-being and flexible work hours.

This sense of putting people first has always been a huge part of my management style, but this is very different to how I was managed in the earlier part of my career – I was never asked how I was feeling and I was never encouraged to take a mental health day, in fact, quite the contrary. It's definitely a shift in the right direction and I'm excited to see how it will impact business structure and process in the future.

From a Media perspective, a lot has changed since I first entered the workforce. There weren't smartphones, watches, TVs or fridges. People didn't search for company or product details online. There was no Spotify or Netflix. Our influencers were our 6 pm newsreaders and sporting heroes, not teens applying make-up on YouTube.

Technology just exploded overnight increasing consumer touchpoints and making our job that much more complex and our advertiser's job that much more challenging.

There also wasn't a lot of hype around the word "strategy". Communications planning is a strategy. We've done this since the beginning of time, it's nothing new.

Where do you see Media heading in the next 10 years?

Technology will continue to get more sophisticated, more personalised. This will continue to challenge the way we reach consumers and influence how we interact with them. This will ultimately impact the way we plan and buy media.

Understanding people will always be the most important part of what we do. But as an industry, we will also need to challenge ourselves to be more creative than ever before in order to connect deeply with consumers and drive outcomes for our clients.

I am hopeful that international media giants, Google and Facebook, will not force local media companies into closure. This would be extremely detrimental to our industry, to our economy and to our people. It would strip away any truly local journalism, information or entertainment. I remain hopeful because I know how resilient and smart Kiwis are - I'm confident our local media companies can continue to adapt and evolve to remain relevant.

What would your advice be to someone wanting to get into Media?

Like anything in life find your passion, understand what drives you and work hard at that every day. Be genuine in your approach because ego will get you nowhere quick, or if it does it will not be lasting! Remain inquisitive and learn from everyone around you. Anchor everything you think or do in people and you will succeed every time. Enjoy the ride but take the time to stop and smell the roses. And finally, if change and risk scare you this won't be the industry for you.