

## My career in brief...

Name: Angela Skelly  
Job title: Director of FIT  
Employer: Jac Travel Ltd



### 1. Please give a brief overview of your career history – where you started, how you progressed, the companies you have worked for etc.

I always had an interest in languages and travel and whilst at college, I worked some evenings and Saturdays at USIT in Dublin, a student travel company, in their billing department. I started working for airlines (Aer Lingus in Dublin then BMI handling services for longhaul airlines in London Heathrow) shortly after graduating from college to gain further travel experience. I worked as a Customer Service Agent at check in and within a couple of years got promoted to Check in Supervisor.

Having worked shift for approximately 3 years I decided a change was needed! I then saw an advert for a 'Group Operations' role at JacTravel. It was something different to what I had been used to and the role sounded interesting as it was working with students organising itineraries and their travel arrangements.

### 2. Have you always wanted to work within hospitality and tourism? If not, how did you end up where you are now?

Yes I have always worked in hospitality and tourism, mainly airlines prior to working at JacTravel. However the role I initially applied for at JacTravel was not the one I ended up being employed for! The then HR manager at JacTravel thought I wouldn't be 'challenged' enough in the Group Operations role so she mentioned another position the company had, 'Business Development Executive' working in the FIT side of the business. This was the individual travel section which was newer and smaller than the more established groups business at the time but the role sounded more intriguing to me as it had commercial responsibility for the running of clients' businesses at JacTravel. So I happily accepted the role and after circa 18 months got promoted to heading up the team as 'Business Development Manager'.

I then started delving more in to the product side of the business as it became clear to grow clients business, I had to have more knowledge of how our procurement worked. After a few months, I progressed from Business Development Manager to become 'Head of Product', overseeing all of the purchasing for both groups and FIT divisions.

A couple of years after that, I was made a company director and was given responsibility for the entire P&L of the FIT division (Groups purchasing then transferred back to the groups division), overseeing sales, purchasing, operations, content entry and our revenue & pricing departments. That is the role I currently hold and it's evolving all the time.

### 3. What sort of qualifications and training have you had?

For my final secondary school exams, I took French & German as two of my selected subjects as I knew they would be useful to be if I wanted a career in tourism. Thereafter I graduated with a Diploma in Travel & Tourism from the Dublin Institute of Technology, Cathal Brugha Street. Most of the training since then has been 'on the job', receiving mentoring and guidance from peers and directors in addition to some in-house training on things like interview techniques etc.

#### **4. What are the top 5 activities you would typically carry out on a daily basis?**

Every day is different but generally the day would start with checking the prior day's performance statistics to ensure trading is where it needs to be. Any issues arising out of this then need to be addressed with the various departments such as sales, revenue management and contracting which I run.

Then a catch up on emails- many come in overnight due to the international nature of our business so clients from Australia or our team in Hong Kong would send through emails that require attention and responding to.

Most days have at least one meeting! That may be a scheduled review with one of the management team or a weekly trading meeting to discuss short term/immediate business issues for example. It may also be an external client or supplier meeting either in our office or the business partner's address

I am in touch with a lot of clients so normally there is some client detail to attend to- this may be a new company interested in working with us or liaising with IT on a complex XML integration which requires commercial input

We're expanding quite a lot at the moment so I'm also involved in many of the recruitment decisions and expansion plans for the business. This can be anything from second interviews for a contractor in Japan to discussing potential entry into a new market.

#### **5. What do you most enjoy about your job?**

Sounds slightly clichéd but the variety- no two days are the same. It's a fast changing industry so things move quickly and the company is in growth mode which means new opportunities- and challenges! I also genuinely enjoy travel- I wouldn't be in the industry otherwise so meeting overseas clients and suppliers, travelling to new destinations is hard but rewarding work. It's very interesting to see how business is done in different cultures and environments.

#### **6. What would you say is the biggest challenge you face on a daily basis?**

As we're expanding we have a need for many new people both in our London HQ and overseas- getting people fully trained and up to speed is a challenge particularly given time differences, sometimes language barriers and often understanding different cultures and ways of doing things. That's what makes the job both challenging and rewarding!

#### **7. What would you say is your biggest achievement to date?**

Being instrumental in getting the FIT division to where it is today from when I started with around a team of 5, to having over 150 staff now running both selling and purchasing sides

of the business-I've also delivered some of the largest clients we have in the business and been with the business during two rounds of private equity investment, most of which was driven by the growth in FIT. In the early days of my career at JacTravel I also designed and worked closely with IT to deliver and implement our original supplier extranet.

### **8. Who has been the greatest influence/role model in your career and why?**

Hmmm I have to say Mario Bodini! I've worked with Mario for over 14 years now, during which time as company MD he was my manager for a number of years. He's been instrumental in guiding me when I've needed help and pushing me to constantly overcome challenges. He was, and remains still, a colleague I can rely on for honesty and advice at all times. He has also led by example, working harder than anyone I have ever met- in any walk of life!

### **9. Do you have a favourite tale or most memorable moment from your career? If so, please tell us about it!**

One of the most memorable but awkward moments of my career was taking a large, VIP German client of ours to see a show in Soho- she had said she wanted to do something more local than touristy so I didn't want to take her to one of the larger west end musicals. I had read reviews of this show which were very favourable- however I didn't know the play contained a lot of bad language and was mainly to do with sex and violence!! Thankfully she is a rather open minded lady and it ended up being one of the funniest evenings out we've ever had- mainly as she was laughing so much about my embarrassment as the show was completely inappropriate to take any client to! She still talks about it to this day when I meet her and likes to tease me about it occasionally....at least she remembers it!

### **10. What piece of advice would you offer someone who wants to work within our industries?**

It is very useful to start in an operational environment to learn the ropes and understand the business from a 'ground up' perspective- this may be working in a hotel at reception or working in reservations in a call centre. There are enormous opportunities for international travel, senior positions for capable and bright people and the opportunity to work in an exciting, fast pace and rewarding industry. Second languages are an advantage and EQ is as important as IQ....Also register with a recruitment company who specialises in travel and tourism recruitment- they are the natural 'go to' people for travel companies wanting to recruit.

### **11. Why would you encourage someone to work in our industry?**

The travel industry is an exciting place to be right now- the world is changing quickly, technology is adapting rapidly and there are huge opportunities for international expansion from countries which are still emerging markets. It's an interesting industry to work in and the opportunities for bright candidates are immense.

## **Further information**

For further information on career opportunities at Jac Travel please visit [www.jactravel.co.uk/join-the-team](http://www.jactravel.co.uk/join-the-team)

For further information on career opportunities in passenger transport and travel please visit [www.careerthatmove.co.uk](http://www.careerthatmove.co.uk)