

An Eye To The Future



Yes, we are all aware of what a mess this country is in. Yes, we are all sick of the accompanying gloom that every government decision brings in its wake. But, at the same time we are equally tired of being told that we owe it to our country to kick start our economy by spending money we don't have, as we dance our way down to the dole queue. We are sick of being patronised by ministers who haven't seen their pension entitlements disappear down the proverbial pan. It's easy for them, we think, and as a nation, we become a little angrier; a little more helpless and a little more complacent as a result.

But one person is fighting back; and not only for herself, but for us all. Communications expert Carol Anne Lowe - through her company *Blue Moon Communications* - has decided to kick start our nation back to greatness; and for her this means much more than media savvy sound bites designed to appease the savage breast, but affirmative action through her recently launched Empowerment Campaign, which she believes, will give people the tools to identify their skills as well as the confidence and self-belief to begin utilising them towards positive change.

To understand why Carol Anne is so willing to give her time, effort and money for something she sees as crucial to the future success of this country, it is important to look at how she arrived where she is today. As a young child brought up in Drinnagh, she came from what she describes as a lower middle class home, where her father's work ethic (he started working very young, doing whatever he needed

to, to ensure his family had all they required and was always actively involved in the local community) was an influencing factor on how she would live her own life.

After discovering (by accident, when mimicking Maria Callas one night for her family) that she had a unique voice, Carol Anne was thrust into the world of professional opera singing almost overnight. After training under Vera Dunne in Ireland and renowned Hungarian singer and voice coach Vera Ròzsa-Nordell in London, by the age of 18 she was touring internationally, performing opera in some of the world's most prestigious venues like La Scala, Milan and Covent Garden, London.

'When it comes to stage performance, having an innate musicality is great, but it's also about that inherent belief that you have something to offer,' says Carol Anne. 'Wherever I was performing in the world, I would stand on the side of the stage and if I felt nervous, I would say to myself "actually this is incredible; not only incredible for me, but for the people out there, to whom I'm going to give an amazing performance." Placing what you can do for somebody else to the fore-front, as opposed to how it feels inherently for yourself, has always been my ethos.'

What Carol Anne also discovered (as well as the tenacity to survive in a world where money is often scarce and a lot of time is spent waiting for the next job offer) was that she had an un-utilised ability at communication; not just on a one-to-one level, but communicating to a large audience and holding their attention. In 1997, when doing a performance at Dublin Castle she was approached by a well-known minister who enquired if she could teach him what she did. 'I asked him if he wanted to learn to sing,' Carol Anne laughs. 'He said, "No I want to learn to hold an audience like that. When you came on stage nobody was really interested and within five minutes you had everyone in the palm of your hands".'

Using skills she has learnt over the years - which include Stage Craft and Neuro Linguistic Programming - Carol Anne developed a highly successful communications model that has seen her coach many world leaders and corporate giants, and while she worked for free for many years the next logical step was to form her company, Blue Moon Communications. But she is quick to reiterate that she is very choosy whom she works with and will vet potential customers to see that they are ethically and morally sound before taking them on as clients.

'Neuro-linguistics, subliminal messaging and convincer strategies are very powerful tools,' continues Carol Anne. 'You are enabling people to become believable, so if I'm going to allow someone have this power of conviction I need to be 100 per cent sure they are going to use it for the good of communities, the good of human beings. I'm not, nor have I ever been, motivated by money; my idea is to take a negative and turn it into a positive - to give people strength and then walk away from them. It's always about empowerment.'

Her original idea was to travel across Ireland giving free seminars, but Carol Anne realised she could reach a larger audience through television, so she invested her

own capital in a series of programmes to be shown on *City Channel* entitled 'Get That Job', training a group of twelve people how to do just that; through identifying skill sets, creating a CV and preparing them for interview, Carol Anne believes that they can optimise on their own skills, allowing them to approach life, and job seeking, in a different way.

'I understand the duality of having one reality at home and the public face,' she explains. 'People who are out of work cannot appear desperate – they can't appear to be someone who has done 52 interviews and no-one has wanted them, because then they are perceived as unsuccessful, and no one wants someone unsuccessful working for them.'

'One of the men who took part on the programme likened losing your job to suffering bereavement,' Carol Anne adds. 'This is so true because people identify themselves by their job, so there are two things going on here: one is the financial side of losing a job, the other is the loss of identity, which is huge, and can be absolutely devastating for people.'

'One of the biggest things we are showing people on the programme is how to empower themselves,' she reiterates. 'To think - I am not unemployed, I am actually working for myself right now - I just don't have a client. I've created a sales-pipe line with people to show them how to approach getting a job, how to identify companies they should be contacting, how to identify their skill sets.'

It's a rare thing in the Ireland of today for someone to put people before profit, but Carol Anne likens recession to a time of war, and believes that those who will survive are those who pool their resources for the greater good. Through her Empowerment Campaign she hopes that other companies will follow her lead, and willingly give their time and expertise to helping others whatever way they can:

'Look, we're a very small company and if I am willing to give this away for free, then maybe bigger companies can do something. If you are an employer can you bring someone in and show them how something is done? There are skills out there that you can show, educate or train, and then, when we do come out of this recession, as a nation we will be stronger, with a workforce that are better skilled, more proficient and more capable.'

Obviously dynamic and utterly persuasive, Carol Anne Lowe is a force to be reckoned with. It is not surprising that she has found success in her chosen fields; whether singing in the great opera houses of the world, acting in *Fair City* (in which she played a Brazilian character, Francesca, with such believability no one realised she was actually Irish), or training world leaders how to communicate their message. It is also not surprising that she is taking the lead at such a crucial time in our country's history, to do something concrete to help.

'I'm not doing this out of any sense of altruism,' Carol Anne is quick to clarify. 'There has to come a moment when we, the people, as the primary force that drives

this country, say that we're not going to take this anymore, but in a positive way. If one person says, "actually I can do something", no matter how small, think of the power that could generate.'

▪For more information on the Empowerment Campaign: www.bluemoon.ie

