

Meet the Flock

An interview with... Janthea Brigden

The Ops Nest

Please tell me about your experience within the industry so far?

I have been in the events business for 30 years. I started providing childcare for Vauxhall at Millbrook Proving Ground for their family incentive days. We were spotted and approached by Ford, Chrysler and Peugeot to do the same. Then we moved into festivals. I met the partner of Vince Power (of Mean Fidler) in Finsbury park, pushing our buggies when the children were tiny and that meeting started a 9 year association with Mean Fidler and later Festival Republic whom we still work with from time to time.

Thinking about your knowledge and expertise, what would your superpower be?

Problem solving! There is always a curve ball that hits when you least expect - such as a break out of Norovirus in the venue; requiring a crèche for over 100 children to be re-sited overnight; being threatened with a knife on a festival field; planning for the possible kidnapping of a high profile child; or being trapped in a hotel for 3 days due to a terrorist threat! So we have become very used to adapting and staying positive. Our childcare pedagogy bans the use of the words 'no' and 'don't' so our business philosophy is the same. Most things can be solved with a little creativity and thought.

What is the most challenging event you have worked on and why?

An event for the Saudi Arabian embassy which had 500 children under the age of 5 and 93 of them were under 1 year. That was challenging in itself, but the curve ball in this instance was that the Arabian calendar is a 10 month calendar so many of the children turned out to be much younger than anticipated requiring more staff to hold and care for them. We used everyone we had with us including set up crew and registration staff! Good job we DBS check everyone!!

What could you not do without onsite?

Gaffa tape! It works for so many things!

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Never treat anyone differently to how you would like to be treated yourself. And be prepared to get your hands dirty when necessary and remain 'one of the team'. I was thrilled recently when needs must required me to change 3 nappies and the childcare professional with me said "Wow! That's the most professional nappy changing I've ever seen! (It included asking the babies first if they minded me changing them of course!)

Funniest onsite experience or most unusual booking?

Air side at Heathrow airport at 4:00am whilst putting up shell scheme and laying flooring, I was asked (or told!) to come 'right now' to some Arabian palace and set up a crèche there. I politely declined but the gentleman insistent on speaking to my 'boss' and it took a while for him to understand that this was me!




Best bit of being in The Flock?

Being connected to others in the event industry, learning about other people's work and the CPD courses!

What are the top 5 things that you have learnt since joining The Ops Nest?

1. Support and connection are key to wellbeing and mental health
2. Learning about how other people do their jobs, makes the 'jigsaw' puzzle of a large event promotes understanding, patience and connection.
3. Everyone in events has a similar work ethic to Nipperbout - 12 hr days and no time to eat or wee!
4. Taking a break is important and needs to be done.
5. That my knowledge and experience of childcare at events is pretty extensive and surprisingly useful to Event Organisers!

If people would like to connect, where can they find you?

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