

# Meet the Flock

## An interview with... Rob Brackstone

**It's been a challenging 2 years for the event industry full stop, but what is the most challenging event you've worked on and why?**

Probably a Paris Air Show years ago when I was a new and very green recruit into our business fresh from retail management and with no practical knowledge at all. The company had been offered a huge volume of work which offered some desperately needed turnover during a recession and over committed across a huge site to different but equally high profile clients and agencies. We were spread so thin that I was in charge of managing everything onsite. I got very fit running about keeping no-one very happy at all. It taught me the dangers of compromising standards for volume when your reputation for quality and making the complicated look easy is your most valuable asset. A lesson I'll do well to remember in 2022.

**Thinking about our industry as a whole, what excites you the most?**

I love what we do, and for us that is giving tangible resonance to a brand that a client treasures and has put years of work into cultivating. I love the anticipation of their smiles when they arrive for handover, seeing what we've done for the first time in physical form. Imagine how excited clients will be now having missed two years of exhibiting in some cases! More than that though, I love employing people. My father was mostly self employed and quite job insecure when I was growing up. Having the chance to offer secure jobs to people in a pleasant and safe environment with the chance for staff no matter their starting point to develop and grow makes me very lucky indeed. Letting some staff go during the pandemic offended every part of my being. Now we've made it to the other side, recruiting, interviewing, growing our business and offering secure employment again is really exciting.

**What's the most unusual job you've been asked to quote on?**

When working for a well known pharmaceutical business we were charged with designing and building for their equally well known erectile dysfunction product. On one occasion this led to us building the one corporate stand at what was essentially and for our client I think unexpectedly, a show about sex toys down in Brighton. Let's just say walking round the show assessing the competition with our client was interesting to say the least!

**What's the best venue to work in and why?**

I visited there as a building site as part of a BECA delegation back in the day, and I've raced a triathlon there, swum in the dock, used a hall for transition, and smashed it on a bike down the ramp. I'm not big on travel so I'll pick our home turf which is ExCeL where I usually have a little smile on my face when I drive in.

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

Not really advice. But when I read 'A theory of Justice' (1971) by John Rawls and the basis for his 'veil of ignorance' it changed the way I look at everything. The veil suggests that when considering others we should all imagine ourselves in an original position, pre-birth, where we don't know where, or who we might be born to, nor what intellectual and physical gifts we might be blessed with. It is a position of maximum objectivity and from there most people would see the logic in designing a society structured around social justice that was fair and equal with mitigation for circumstance. It is a bit deep but it also translates day to day and it made me think no matter the circumstances or situation, you don't necessarily know what anyone has been through or even what sort of day they have had, just try to always think the best of, and be kind to people. Kindness costs nothing.

**How do you unwind?**

I swim, ride and run. I took up triathlon as a hobby in 2013, and have embraced every lifestyle aspect of it since. I also coach sometimes, adults and juniors in all disciplines, athletes one to one including elite age groupers who race for GB, and beginners including a new group of up to a dozen Breast Cancer survivors who take on a triathlon for the first time each year to raise money for charity. I love everything about triathlon as a sport and as a lad that loves a beer it keeps me just about fit enough too.

**Best bit of being in The Flock?**

Getting different perspectives on our industry. We are a contractor, but we occupy such a small niche and are just one part of the solution to providing exhibitors with the chance to make the most of the opportunity to grow their businesses when presented with live event opportunities. It takes the bravery of organisers, expertise of ops professionals, organisation and resource of service contractors, and imagination, creativity and practicality of the people we employ to ultimately deliver engagement for delegates and a return on their investment for the exhibitor. I think it is important to understand the part everyone plays in the process and understand what is important to others so we can all work more seamlessly together which can only be good for the industry as a whole.

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

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The Ops Nest

