



Jo Ferguson

Business Operations Manager

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Listen to successful people. Don't be afraid to ask them for guidance in your career.

Realise the importance of life skills (part time work) alongside the academic results.

Introduce yourself, where do you work? What is your job role?

My name is Jo Ferguson and I manage Business Operations at CME Group in Belfast. CME Group is the world's leading and most diverse derivative marketplace. That means we host a platform for global trading to take place. The Belfast Office is mainly a technology office, where the trading applications are developed and supported.

What does your job entail?

I do a little bit of everything. I'm no longer hands-on technical, however I'm responsible for the technology inventory and procurement. I run a team that supports the Belfast Office for their daily business as usual activities, such as facilities and real estate, budget, logistics, travel, training, interns, corporate communications, Health and Safety, relationships with Government, Academia and Industry Peers, events and much more. I work with every department in the company, and we also support some other sites in their needs.

How did you get into this line of work?

I joined CME Group in Belfast at the very beginning, 8 years ago, when there were only 10 local employees. Now there are over 300. Initially, I was employed to look after the financial reporting for the site, however it soon became apparent that there were a large number of previously undocumented tasks required to run the business, and I stepped forward to take on those tasks, which grew the role exponentially.

Outline your career to date

I attended an all-girls school and was encouraged to go into engineering, as I enjoyed Maths and Physics. After uni, my first job was as a telecoms engineer – I drove a van and installed and programmed telephone systems. I then moved into telephone billing and project management for a few other companies. I managed the technology projects for a global company, and was managing a team of project managers, but wanted a new challenge – so joined CME Group.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

My A levels are in Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Chemistry, and my degree is in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. I have completed various professional training courses in Management, Leadership and Projects Management.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

The ability to multitask and juggle priorities is key in my role. Much of the work is interrupt-driven as I'll be working on analysing a financial spreadsheet, and a question about Health and Safety will pop in (or appear at my desk in normal circumstances). I have a great team working for me, who make me look good – but I always remind them of that! Every task that my team take on, I have done at some point, and am happy to muck in when we need to get busy on a high focus deliverable.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I have built homes for struggling families in Zambia, India and South Africa. I can lay bricks, do joinery, lay roof tiles etc.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

I've had some fantastic managers in my career. I appreciate those who are approachable, supportive and open, and who understand the psychology side of working with people, combined with the specialism and expertise.

Whats the best advice you have ever received?

"Praise in public, rebuke in private". - We've all seen someone get told off in a public forum, and it does not invoke respect. "What's in it for them?" - As a project manager, you are asking many people to deliver tasks on time, quality, and cost. You are not their boss. To ensure you have their trust and communication, you need to advise all stakeholders what their place is in the plan, so they can feel appreciated and understand their part.