

Training

Woman who loves Mondays

Anderson Food Hygiene won the Society of Food Hygiene and Technology's best training company award last November. **Stuart Spear** asks founder **Sylvia Anderson** how she did it and what she gains from working with the CIEH

Q: What do you think gives your company the edge over your competitors and so earned you the award?

A: There are many people offering what I do but not many of them have worked in kitchens. It means that I can work at my clients' level, because I have done their job and so they truly understand what I am saying.

We also teach in such a fun manner because I find food hygiene so exciting. It's not just about standing up there and giving the answers – I think it's about winning people over and making them feel comfortable.

Q: What previous experiences do you have in kitchens?

A: I trained as a chef in 1989 and have worked in the hospitality industry for 24 years. I worked as a chef for some good names such as the Grosvenor House Hotel in London, Buckingham Palace, on P&O cruise liners and was part of the opening team for Euro Disney 1992.

I worked for really good places and each place bounced me off to another good place.

Q: How did you come to work as a chef at Buckingham Palace?

A: It was a private event where I was working for the *Time Team*, who were digging up the grounds looking for jewels. They asked me and another guy to cook for the team there.

I worked in the hospitality industry for 24 years'

Q: Is that the only time you have been involved with TV?

A: No, I made an ITV programme in 2009, where I went under cover to investigate one of the biggest cases of food poisoning among hotel guests in a four-star resort in the Dominican Republic. I went as a tourist with a hidden camera. The holiday was paid for by ITV but it was really quite frightening. The travel industry was sending people out knowing what was going on and ITV wanted to show it. My phone has not stopped ringing since.

Q: How did you make the transition from working in kitchens to running a training business?

A: In the kitchens, they were such long hours and I did not have a life, so I worked for five years for TGI Friday's, starting as a waitress and ending up as a training and recruitment officer. With them I fell into health and safety and food hygiene and really enjoyed it, so I put myself back through university and went

and did a postgraduate diploma in health and safety management.

Q: How has the economic downturn impacted your business?

A: People are cutting back on training so our clients want in-house training as it's more cost-effective. People are also trying to qualify themselves as trainers by coming on our courses and doing the three-day level 3 in food safety and then level 3 training skills and practice. It is since the qualification level for being a trainer has been lowered from level 4, which was a five-day course, two assignments and an exam.

Q: So you think the entry point for being a trainer is too low?

A: It has got too easy. But people who have been through the process find when they start to teach level 2 they can't do it, because it is very hard to open a book and just learn a subject.

Q: How do you find working with the CIEH?

A: I love them. They are a brilliant team. I do work in the Middle East and train in Europe and I found customer service teams and especially the sales team are always really helpful and go out of their way – nothing is too much for them.

Q: Do you find the quality of the training material meets your needs?

A: Yes, it does absolutely. The CIEH is always coming up with new ideas and it has classes that you can go to that keep you abreast of things. I am signed up with other authorising bodies but I always go back to the CIEH, because it is a brand I can trust.

Q: What do you love about training?

A: I get up on Monday morning when it's really gloomy and get excited about food safety, it's sad isn't it? But I love my job so much and it shows by winning this award.

I also can balance work and family, which is the main reason I set up the business. Not many people know that I run this business and am a mum to two-year-old twins.

Q: Are you planning to do any more TV?

A: There are some programmes in the pipeline. **E**

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Anderson Food Hygiene
Specialists in food hygiene and health & safety

