

THIS MONTH



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- March Break Mind Games
- March Break Project: Bottle Cap Magnets
- Working at Testing Toys
- Get Your Resume to the Top of the Stack
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- Time Waits for No Single Mother
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CATEGORIES



Time Waits for No Single Mother

by Jo Langham

I've always been good at juggling, and that's a good thing. Because when you've made working in PR agencies a way of life, one client call or one unfavorable media article can throw the to-do list you had for the day out of the window.

Then six years ago I became a single mum living a PR-agency life with family more than 3,500 miles away, and juggling took on a whole new perspective! I was forced to take my organizational skills and focus them on creating work-life balance.

When I made the decision to go back to work full time, one criterion in my workplace selection was what a company could provide to help me get through the day. I joined APEX Public Relations because the company culture puts as much emphasis on employees as it does clients. The good news for clients is that this employee focus means better staff retention and therefore account-team consistency, with all the benefits that implies.

What it means for me as a single mum is that I don't feel too guilty when I head for the door at 5 pm — my colleagues and my clients are accepting of the fact that I need to pick up my son from childcare. They also know that I have the technology at home to log on once my son is in bed and continue our discussion, move a document forward or review materials.

I chose my son's childcare almost before I chose his school, though happily for us they come hand-in-hand in the same building. I knew that caring, consistent and reliable staff was a must for us. Five years have proven that I can turn up at 7:30 am, day in day out, and they'll be there to welcome him with open arms. This means I can be in the office by 8 o'clock and get on with that to-do list before the lineups start at my door, which goes some way towards quelling those 5 pm guilt-trips.

I allow myself to rely on friends (sometimes tough to do when you're used to being self-reliantly single) to supply extended sitter capabilities — like when I need to be away for a couple of nights for work. Friends are happy to help and can be repaid in many ways — chocolate works for instance!

Speaking of sitters ... Thursday night has always been mummy's night. At 6 pm every Thursday the doorbell is rung by the sitter. This makes accepting social invitations a no-brainer and does away with the search-for-a-sitter chaos that many of my friends endure.

Yes, I recently got a Blackberry. When I'm sitting at Kumon or at the swimming pool waiting for my son to finish that evening's activities, I can put in another 30 minutes at the office or catch up with friends through Twitter and Facebook.

Last, but absolutely not least, I am single-minded when it comes to being present in my son's life. Nothing gets in the way of the school holiday concert; a promised visit to the zoo; or our family night. I even invested in a cleaner who works her magic every two weeks and leaves my evenings and weekends dust free. It's worth every penny to ensure that mopping the floor isn't something I have to juggle!



About the Author



Jo Langham is a proud single-mum of a seven year-old boy and is Senior Vice President at APEX Public Relations in Toronto where she leads the Consumer Marketing practice. Keeping her work life busy are clients in the food and beverage, fashion and beauty, health and wellness, finance and energy sectors. Jo is also on the Accreditation Counsel for the International Association of Business Communicators, and sits on the board of the Central Eglinton Children's Centre, her son's fabulous childcare!



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