

JEANNE HEINZER



42-year old Jeanne Heinzer is German and lives in The Hague, in the Netherlands, with her Swiss husband and two children. Understanding what really drives her helped her carve out a career as an intercultural trainer, where she now puts her love of languages and people contact to use on a daily basis.

ME AND MY PASSIONS:

My passions are foreign languages and people, particularly anyone who finds themselves living in a country, which is not their own, as I do.

ABOUT MY CAREER:

I now have my own business, Heinzer Consulting, which enables international managers and their partners to live happier lives while living abroad. I am an intercultural coach and trainer, accompanying mobile people through their transition and assignment to allow them to make the most of it, personally and professionally. I work on a freelance and self-employed basis, which is great as it gives me the flexibility to decide whether or not I want to take on a project.

My work means I also get to travel; another of my passions. Although my intercultural workshops don't pay terribly well, they do allow me to break out of my routine and give me the perspective and distance I need to take a look at my own life. I offer a bespoke service, tailored exactly to the intercultural needs of a particular client and work with individuals, couples and accompanying partners. Combining my training with a coaching approach my clients learn about the new country in which

they find themselves but often they learn as much about themselves in the process.

HOW I FOUND MY PASSION:

It took me some time to find out that I needed a job where I can work with foreigners on a regular basis. I found my passion a long time ago, when I studied languages (English and French) in Germany. But although I managed to live my primary passion of languages, I had to go through a personal crisis to fully understand that I am primarily a people person.

I had been working as a communications manager for a chemical company in Basel and although some people had warned me that this job would be too technical for me, I didn't listen to them. However, after two years I was really fed up of sitting in front of a PC and not working *with* people. I was close to burn out, working full time and studying communications in London, when I finally realised that I had to take a dramatic decision. It was at that time that a good friend said to me, "Du musst für etwas brennen, damit Du nicht ausbrennst!" which roughly translates as "you have to burn for something so that you don't burn out". Her words came at just the right time. The decision was to leave both public relations, which I felt was much too superficial for me, and the corporate world, opting instead to move back into self-employment.

I realised that it is not enough to train people or to be considered the expert providing them with answers to their questions. I must help them to find their own unique answers by asking questions. So what I do now is to combine training with a coaching approach. Depending on the circumstances in the training room I adapt my own style to meet my participants' requirements. My

objective is to allow them to leave the room thinking: this has really added value to me.

HOW I MADE MY PASSION MY REALITY:

The toughest thing was having to cope with the internal struggle and voice nagging away at me saying, “but Jeanne, you have invested so much in your career in communications, you can’t just stop it now.” But I knew there was a high price to be paid if I stayed in the corporate world, including the loss of my freedom and a sacrifice in terms of my independence and creativity. The crucial change happened when I realised that instead of using the skills I had learnt for others, I could use them for myself.

I already had the personal experience of being an accompanying partner and working in five European countries I had worked with almost every nationality on earth. I felt that the time was right to bring it all together. When I was approached by an intercultural service provider, offering settling in and acculturation advice to those new to an overseas posting, and asked to be her co-trainer for a British guy moving to Germany. I was a complete novice. I had never done this kind of work before, and she just handed me the folders.

I prepared over the weekend, delivered the training and loved it. The training went so well that the same lady approached me again when I had just moved back to Switzerland and asked if I could be their intercultural trainer over there. I agreed instantly and flew to London for training. They did not pay for my trip, nor for the accommodation, so I had to invest a lot of my own money into the project. It was definitely worth it.

Before stopping work in the corporate world, I had saved quite a bit of money and initially I scaled down from a

full-time job to working half time, which helped me overcome the financial shock. Slowly, I have managed to work my way up to a position where I am totally independent.

Taking a course in coaching was the real eye-opener and I now consider myself an intercultural coach, trainer and facilitator and have my own business, Heinzer Consulting, which enables international managers and their partners to live happier lives while living abroad.

When I made the change I knew it was right because it just fitted; I didn't need to think about whether it was right or wrong. The feedback I was getting from participants also proved that I was on the right path.

People often ask me about my educational background. My background is not academic but based on experience. Having the courage to live many lives in one life is my personal recipe. I believe that as an intercultural trainer life experience is almost more important than the educational background.

I became a good trainer by training, training and training. Of course, it really helped to have a PR background as I knew how to sell myself and my services. I also feel that it is very valuable to have worked in five or six different industries. As a trainer I constantly work in different company environments and can consequently easily relate to people. It is also helpful that I have experience of life abroad as a single, couple and as a family, because it adds credibility to every single mission. I make sure I continue educating myself in both coaching and NLP.

WHO HELPED ME ALONG THE WAY:

Cendant Intercultural Services
(<https://homepage.cartus.com/>) who trained me to become one of their trainers.

Jo Parfitt, *A Career in Your Suitcase*, Summertime Publishing.

The Professional Women's Group in Basel
(<http://www.pwg-basel.ch/>)

Accompanying partners and companies in Switzerland who trusted me.

THE DIFFERENCE A BIT OF PASSION HAS MADE TO MY LIFE:

Finding and working with my passion now means that my life just feels so right. I am following my own path and that's what's important, putting my own unique gifts to good use. Pursuing my passion has helped me to overcome my own hurdles and deal with my own challenges. Helping others to deal with transition proves to be the best remedy for myself; I learn so much from my participants that it helps and forces me to put my own feelings about living abroad into words and into messages for them.

With my own life as transient as it is my passion has proved my personal anchor. It has forced me to integrate more consciously, as I need to be able to walk my talk.

Contact me on: jheinzer@heinzerconsulting.com

Take a look at my website:

www.heinzerconsulting.com

