

Anne Clydesdale...

Relishing New Leadership Role



When it comes to offices with a touch of class, Anne Clydesdale has one of the better ones.

Picture by Martyn Boyd, QUB

The Interim Director of the newly-established Leadership Institute at Queen's University has an office in the much-admired new Riddel Hall at Stranmillis... looking out over the pristine gardens of what was once the home of the first women undergraduates to study at the university.

But, while her surroundings are a bonus, it's clear that Anne Clydesdale is relishing the latest challenge of an impressive career in sales and training.

"I'm really excited about what we can achieve here," she says. "I was all set to take things a bit easier, but once this opportunity presented itself, I just couldn't resist it. I've been here since March and things are really starting to shape up.

"I don't think too many of us realise what a great reputation Queen's University School of Management has on the global stage, and our aim at the Institute is to translate that to working on a wide range of highly practical and highly effective training programmes for businesses here in Northern Ireland.

"I really believe that there is something very special happening here at Riddel Hall, and that it will help put Northern Ireland on the business map."

Clydesdale is a familiar name to many in the business community here. She spent 20-odd years as Director of Training at B.I.C. Systems, one of the team of five directors alongside Ed Vernon and John Convery,

When B.I.C. Systems was sold at the height of the market - or close to it - to BT Northern Ireland, she moved over to BT to help manage the transition for former BIC staff before taking a break from high-level professional life... opening a delicatessen on Belfast's Lisburn Road.

But the cut and thrust of that professional life drew her back once again, this time to join PwC where she worked on leadership and management development programmes, basing herself for a good proportion of her time at PwC's London offices.

"In the end, I got a bit tired of the commute back and forth from London, and decided to take things a bit easier back at home. It was as simple as that... at least until the call from Queen's came through," she smiles.

The new Leadership Institute forms an important part of Queen's University's master plan for Queen's. Its ethos revolves around a desire to engage with local businesses, to facilitate their growth and development and to contribute to the growth of the Northern Ireland economy.

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And Anne Clydesdale is equally passionate about what can be achieved through the Leadership Institute.

"We're working hard on introducing a range of programmes for business leaders here," she says. "We already have our Emerging Leaders Programme in place for the coming year, and it's a programme which will help capable departmental and specialist managers to become first-class leaders across the board.

"We'll be moving on from that to launch a top-end leadership programme, a programme on managing organisational change, one on managing effective boards... and there will be more in the pipeline behind those."



Riddel Hall

The Leadership Institute's website - www.leadershipinstitute.co.uk - has just been launched and gives full details of planned programmes as well as an insight into the Institute's highly practical and time-effective approach to learning.

"By way of example, the Emerging Leaders Programme takes place over six months, but it requires just 10 days off-site. We're all too aware of the time pressures facing business leaders in the current climate.

"What's more, our approach to leadership development recognises that most of our learning occurs on the job. That's what lies behind our 70:20:10 model... meaning that our programmes can be split into 70% application in the workplace, 20% learning from others and 10% learning in classroom situations."

The Leadership Institute can also offer bespoke and customised programmes for individual organisations in both the private and public sectors, based on face-to-face contact and detailed analysis of the organisation's training needs. It's an area that Anne Clydesdale is entirely comfortable with.

"At the end of the day, one reason I'm enjoying this role so much is that I'm a sales person at heart. I'm really enjoying getting out and talking to companies and organisations

about what we can do for them here at Riddel Hall," she adds.

The Institute intends to work closely with the key business organisations here. The Institute of Directors is based in the same Riddel Hall building. The Leadership Institute has already been talking to the IOD, the NI Chamber of Commerce and other key stakeholder groups to explore opportunities for collaboration.

"Part of the ethos of the School of Management here is to have robust and lasting links with business, industry and the public sector... and we're very happy to subscribe to that ethos."

Anne Clydesdale is all too aware that there are some hurdles to be jumped. "There's been a perception for some time that, for really high level management learning, you've got to hop on a plane and go the US. So there's a challenge for us... to persuade people that they can get the learning they need right here on their doorstep."

But the American way of doing things won't be ignored. Clydesdale is already in discussions with Harvard, MIT & Babson College to extend links and look at potential areas of collaboration.

"Our aim is to have an evolving portfolio of programmes and activities," she says. "That's why it is important to engage with other leadership organisations worldwide

as well as with the customer base here... the business community."

Through its leadership programmes, the masterclasses, short courses and conference events, Anne is determined that Riddel Hall will become a valued focal point for leadership development and executive education in Northern Ireland.

The organisation has already been working with the members of the Founders' Club at Riddel Hall, a group of leading local business organisations who signed up at an early stage to back and help fund the re-development of the new home for Queen's University's Business & Management activities.

"I've been really encouraged by the response," says Anne Clydesdale. "Almost as soon as the Vice Chancellor's letter introducing me went out, I was getting calls and emails welcoming me back into the business fold here in Northern Ireland.

"Over in London, you live by your CV. Here in Belfast, you live by your reputation. That's not a bad thing..."

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