

Meet the Marketer

Our ongoing series of short interviews with leading financial services marketers, uncovers the driving forces behind their careers and what makes them tick. This month we get to know more about one of the industry's most creative and innovative marketers - **Anne-Marie McConnon**, Chief Marketing Officer, BNY Mellon.

🗣️ Please introduce yourself...

I'm Anne-Marie McConnon – Irish to the core, mum to two beautiful girls and passionate about driving innovation and purpose in marketing.

🗣️ What is your career history?

I've worked most of my career in investment management, with a short dally to an online procurement business about 12 years ago. I sort of fell into the investment industry and then fell in love with it. There is a real element of skill in marketing investment products – you have to understand technical products, clients, and at the same time, drive innovation in what can be a very traditional and sales/product-led business. I like the challenge.

🗣️ Why marketing?

It might be controversial for some, but I absolutely believe marketing is the heart of an organisation. At its best, the marketing department should be the best place to work in the company. Personally, I love the breadth of the job, the creativity and the innovation – being in marketing has enabled me to do some amazing things, such as sing in a choir with Gareth Malone, help



achieve equality for women in sports, save lives through game-changing sponsorships, and row the Irish sea – as well as some innovative campaigns and big brand projects that have made a difference along the way.

I love the breadth of the job, the creativity and the innovation – being in marketing has enabled me to do some amazing things.

🗣️ What excites you about the future of Financial Services?

The fact that the potential is so huge. I am not sure anyone has cracked it yet, from a marketing perspective. Investment marketing still has a way to go to catch up on

other sectors, in terms of marketing having a genuine seat at the table and being seen as a revenue-generator and not a cost centre. There is also a great opportunity to reach more people who don't invest today. Technology and the shifting of power to the individual means that we can engage more people in investing. Take women for example, a recent report showed that 64% of women think investing is important but only 6% actually invest. The potential to make a positive impact on people's lives is huge.

🗣️ What are some of the biggest challenges in your industry?

One of the biggest challenges is attracting and retaining talent. Technology is perceived to be sexier

than say, financial services, and by 2025, 70% of the workforce will be millennials. Perhaps the broader application of technology – fintech – will help attract more of this talent, but we need to communicate what's great about this industry – its

You can be ruthless in your decision, but humane in the execution.

importance in the world, and the fact that millions of everyday people rely on its expertise to achieve their life goals. It is a dynamic, exciting, innovative, and most importantly, friendly and full of great people.

Q What's the best advice you have ever received?

It was from a leadership coach Simon Starmore, who told me that you can be ruthless in your decision, but humane in the execution. I took this to mean that you should care about people – and not forget that, when you have tough decisions to make.

Q What advice would you give a marketer starting out today?

I would say follow your passion and always stay true to yourself. By the latter I mean don't focus too much on your weaknesses but play to your strengths. Always work with, and for, great people. Finally, don't be afraid to fail. This is particularly true in marketing – you have to be willing to go against the grain every now and then by trying new things. Sometimes you won't get the result you wanted – but you will always have learned something new by trying.

Q If you could have any mentor, who would it be?

Gertrude Ederle who was the first woman to swim the English Channel

– and she did it wearing motorcycle goggles. She taught us about true grit. In her own words, "I knew it could be done, it had to be done, and I did it".

Q What's the key marketing skill you will be developing over the next few years?

I believe focusing on making marketing a science, as well as an art, and really building the

perceived to be selling a very sexy product. Most people would rather do anything other than talk about their pension. So we have to think about how we engage clients better, but also our employees. Take Airbnb for example – they are not selling anything particularly exciting but instead of following the traditional business model, create change and empower employees at all levels. It has a huge effect on the success

Modern marketers shouldn't lose sight of good old-fashioned skills, such as brilliant copywriting and direct marketing.

reputation of marketing as a strategic function. As a result, mastering the power of marketing technology to deliver a better client experience will be key. With all of these new tools comes a demand for a new set of skills to use them. But modern marketers shouldn't lose sight of good old-fashioned skills, such as brilliant copywriting and direct marketing – which starts and ends with really knowing your customer.

Q What lessons could financial marketers learn from other sectors?

One of our biggest problems is that the financial services sector is not

of the company, both monetarily and culturally. I think FS employers could do more to engage employees to amplify brand, promote product and attract talent to our businesses.

Also, how we communicate investment messages has to change in the future – the power of imagery and video could be transformative for financial services. Social media brands and true digital brands are visually engaging. Something we can definitely learn from. □