



LEADERSHIP LESSONS

## **Beware of all-women groups and other lessons my first manager taught me**

**The leader that made me: comms founder Anna King on her first ‘proper’ boss.**

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Your early leaders can be the most influential in your career. Whether it's a roll call of memorable quotes, a lift up the career ladder or an insensitive public dressing down - everyone has a past boss that remains in their memory for good and bad reasons.

For Anna King, the founder and director of property sector focused communications company Informare, that boss is Gill Parker. Parker was King's "first proper boss" and

they've spent 20 years working with and for each other, first at design studio BDG Architecture + design, latterly as a client after King started her own comms company.

It's been a partnership full of lessons, but there are three that spring to King's mind that other leaders could learn from.

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### **“Stay the course”**

Early in my career I was studying several evenings a week for my Chartered Institute of Marketing exams and a colleague from another department of a similar age and less experience was bumped up to director of marketing.

To me it felt more than a little unfair. Anyway Gill encouraged me to hold steady and not be distracted by it. It's a marathon, not a sprint, and careers with longevity and authenticity are built steadily with strong foundations. A quick ascent is often followed by an equally speedy descent.

### **“Beware of the ‘all-women’ groups”**

The property sector 20 years ago was far more male dominated than it is now. Gill's approach was never to behave like a man or form an exclusive female group to challenge the status quo - all that would result in was another exclusive club when what we actually need is full integration to be equal.



Gill taught me to use intelligence and stealth to build alliances regardless of gender. This means steering clear of anyone with a reputation for sexism (“you can’t reason with unreasonable people, so don’t waste your energy”) and focusing attention on those that will support you without bias. You don’t need to be loud and aggressive to affect change, in fact the opposite approach is often more successful.

### **“It's possible to have everything – just not all immediately”**

I started my family at the age of 26. After my second child (I now have three) I needed greater flexibility and Gill encouraged me to work as a consultant which allowed me to have flexibility and time for my family – and that was how I started my business.

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