

Stephanie Cartwright-Randle

Personally devastated by the death of her sales manager partner, Stephanie Cartwright-Randle also feared for the future of the business they had established together.

However, her print and packaging business is growing more than ever, thanks to the lifeline thrown a much-underestimated business movement.

Thanks to the support of business networking groups, Cornerstone has enjoyed full recovery in under a year since Danny Wickham tragically died from a brain haemorrhage, aged only 55.

➤ Unconditional support

Business networking groups are quickly gaining the recognition they truly deserve. Meetings aren't just about identifying leads to more contracts – they also enable people to exchange ideas, while providing one another with unconditional practical and emotional support.

Research shows that networking is 100 percent more likely to win business than cold-calling, while 70 percent of all business transactions are the result of word-of-mouth marketing.



➤ Right Hand Man

“The emotional grief of losing Danny was bad enough – but I had also lost my right-hand business partner,” said Stephanie.

“Knowing nothing about sales, I faced a hopeless search for a new sales manager – knowing I could never replace the man with whom I’d built the business.”

Advising and providing solutions for all print and packaging requirements, Stephanie and Danny established Cornerstone in 2001.

“I was born into the print industry, since my parents ran a printing company,” said Stephanie.

“I lost confidence in the business and couldn't find the answers I needed”

“While other children were fiddling about with their John Bull printing kits, my sister and I were playing with the real thing – designing and printing cards, then playing shops to sell them to fictitious customers!

“When I left school, I didn't want to go into the family business straight away, so I took an office job – and was board stiff from day one! There was no client interaction, no sense of reward, no feeling of satisfaction.”

Networking Breathes Life into Business After Tragedy

» Cornering the market

So Stephanie joined the family business – and 17 years later took it over with her sister.

“We caused quite a stir by buying one of the first B2 Perceptor 2-colour printing machines – cornering the market of speedway programme production!”

When Stephanie’s sister married and left the business, the Solihull woman ran it alone – until the recession bit hard, forcing a change of direction to employment in printmanagement.

Turning her back on printing altogether to run a pub, only two years later Stephanie was back at the press – working for a large print company in Birmingham as an estimator.

So began a series of print and packaging-related jobs which broadened Stephanie’s knowledge of the industry – without which, Cornerstone would never have been born.

Made redundant by her last employer – where she met Danny – Stephanie suggested that the two of them set up their own unique business offering print and packaging solutions. Cornerstone was launched.

Only four years later – having established a highly successful business – Danny suffered his brain haemorrhage. Stephanie said: “I was emotionally devastated and couldn’t get my head around the business. Losing confidence in myself, I also lost confidence in the business and couldn’t find the answers I needed.

“Networking groups... enable people to exchange ideas ... and provide one another with support”

“That solution came in the most surprising way. I was at a Birmingham City football match where I got chatting to a fellow visitor.



I mentioned the problems I was having and she suggested I join some business networking groups. It’s something I knew nothing about, so had never tried before.”

» Support and identity

Stephanie took the stranger’s advice – and hasn’t looked back since. “The general support of fellow members from various networking groups boosted my self-confidence and therefore my

business confidence – I realised that we all had problems that we could help one another with. Unlike family and friends, these people really understood what you were going through.”

Stephanie added: “I was a bit nervous when I first started attending, but soon decided it was for me – and I haven’t looked back. The need for a salesman has gone out of the window – I do it all myself now, since the network meetings have opened the floodgates on the new business and service providers I am always looking for – and I hold the key!”

Serving clients throughout the UK, Solihull-based Cornerstone provides print and package solutions for all manner of subject matter.

Looking to the future, Stephanie is keen to help new-starters and small businesses grow. “So often, potential business people are put off taking the plunge because of misconceptions about the high expense of print and packaging – especially when they only want to trial a new product. Cornerstone offers affordable solutions for such people.

» Customers come first

“The company has no vested interest in the companies it uses, so we can always put our customers’ interests first.”

Stephanie concluded: “I never dreamed I could pull it off without Danny – and I wouldn’t have succeeded without business networking. Danny would have been very proud of me!”