



NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Mayfair is fertile ground for start-ups hoping to bag a slice of the high net-worth pie. Lucy Douglas and Lorna Davies meet the young entrepreneurs who are making waves in W1

JAMIE LANDESBERG, 4 The People

ENTREPRENEUR JAMIE Landesberg talks a lot about luck. She says getting her business off the ground, events management company 4 The People, which she launched aged 28, is down to being at the right place at the right time to secure her first clients, and the good fortune that she had such strong relationships with caterers, venue teams, florists and other suppliers. I'm not sure I believe her.

4 The People organises weddings and events for corporates and big spending private clients, and in less than three years, Landesberg has built a portfolio that includes events in New York and the French Mediterranean coast, and an assortment of London's finest hotels. Mayfair is prime location for her business, putting her in close proximity with the most sought-after venues and the discerning clients that choose her services. "Mayfair has got so many places where people want to be," she says. "There's a lot of buzz, and it's great for networking. I meet people all the time. I've picked up three or four clients just sitting in here."

Here is The Arts Club, the bustling private members' venue on Dover Street, and it's a hive of activity on the Thursday mid-morning that we meet. Landesberg waves at people from our table in a quiet corner. Warm and erudite, she seems to have that enviable ability to have a meaningful conversation with anyone she meets, an essential skill as the founder of a start-up business in need of new

clients. "You've got to constantly network," she says. "No matter how tired you are at the end of the day, if there's an event you've got to go because you have to constantly be meeting people."

Landesberg launched 4 The People in April 2013, and although 28 may seem a tender age to launch a business, she says that having no other responsibilities was a plus. "In this industry, all your energy has to go into [the business]," she says. "And really, to set up any business on your own you've got to have such passion and drive." Not that she is planning to put her business on hold should the time come for a family; in fact, she says that being in charge of a business puts working mothers in an easier position. "When you work for yourself you manage your time," she says. "A man can be a husband, father and businessman, so why can't a woman be a wife, mother and businesswoman?"

She is passionate about challenging the stereotypes of successful women. "There's this assumption that women who have a career are really tough and not very personable and not particularly feminine, and I'd like to change people's opinions on that," she says.

Personable Landesberg certainly is. She trained as an interior architect, but found she missed the interaction with people and moved into events. She says it's the ability to relate to and communicate well with clients that makes an events organiser good at their job. "You have to have a mouldable personality. You have to be able to adjust to different people. You're going to have the no-nonsense types that want you to get straight to the point, and the over-excitable fluffiness, especially with some brides. You can't have one personality for all clients."

It's easy to feel Landesberg's passion for her business, which must be reassuring if you're a bride placing the arrangements for the most special day of your life in someone else's hands. "Every single job is the most important day of someone's life," she points out. But despite being nearly three years in, she says that the nerves still take hold before an event.

"When you go it alone, you're depending on one person and that's you. I always say we're only as good as our last job, so if we don't go into this fearful of it not being 100 per cent perfect for the client, then I don't think we are really putting enough care into what we're doing. I just did a three-day wedding in the south of France, and it was phenomenal. That doesn't mean that my next event is going to be phenomenal; I have to make sure it is."

With a full-time assistant now on board, Landesberg says she's getting better at delegating, but she emphasises that she is very much the face of 4 The People, and the brain behind every event it plans. That sounds like a big challenge when there's only one of her to go around. "I would never take on more than one job in a day, because I think you should be focused on that one client," she says. "At the moment I'm the first one in, last one out. I think because I care so much I would find it very hard to take a back step." It's clear from speaking to her that Landesberg works incredibly hard; perhaps that's why she's so lucky.





ZACK STONE, Steven Stone

IT'S EASY TO DISMISS someone who steps straight into a senior role at a family business as reaping the rewards of the previous generations' hard graft. But think twice before writing Zack Stone off as an undeserving benefactor. The 28-year-old managing director of jeweller Steven Stone is plotting the expansion of the family-run company and pushing the ancient craft trade into the 21st century.

We meet at the company's new London outpost – a boutique on St Christopher's Place with a substantial selection of corpulent precious stones glinting from glass cabinets, which opened in the autumn. According to the younger Stone it was he, and not his father, that was the driving force behind opening a London store.

"I decided about two years ago that I wanted to have something here," he says. "We do a lot of online business but, with jewellery, not everyone's going to buy online."

Stone hadn't always planned to go into the family business, his interests being piqued by web design while he was still at school. But after finishing his A Levels and at the behest of his father, he took a course in diamonds at the Gemology Institute of America's (GIA) London centre and inexorably found himself the third generation of (aptly named) Stone in the jewellery emporium.

The company was originally founded by Zack Stone's grandfather and his brother in 1937, dealing in gold, bullion and antique jewellery, among other things. They formalised the business as Stone Brothers in 1957, supplying independent jewellers across the country. It was Stone's father, Steven, who turned the company into a customer-facing jeweller and changed its name to Steven Stone in 1998.

"I don't like the idea of buying things in if I can't control the manufacturing, or if I don't know whether the quality is there"

With his father now overseeing the company's expansion into the USA with a new store opening in Palm Beach, Zack Stone is firmly at the helm in London. It's a competitive field, selling diamonds in Mayfair, just around the corner from iconic brands like Tiffany and De Beers, but Stone isn't intimidated. Steven Stone specialises in making bespoke pieces and using only stones that have been certificated by the GIA, widely considered to be the leading global authority on diamonds and other precious stones.

And that doesn't cost as much as you might think, he says. He can undercut the big players by not buying in expensive stock and making pieces to order. On the website, customers can select their diamond from more than 100,000 available through Steven Stone's partner suppliers, and search by shape and the four Cs: carat, clarity, colour and cut – a nifty feature that Stone takes the credit for.

"The side I like is the machines, the manufacturing, the technical side," he says. "I don't like the idea of buying things in if I can't control the manufacturing, or if I don't know whether the quality is there."

In 2009, Steven Stone was one of the first jewellers in the country to use a 3D printer to make moulds for their jewellery, which Stone explains upped their productivity from around two or three rings a day to 50 or 60.

Looking forward, Stone is eyeing a third UK store, in Edinburgh, and growing international sales online. "I think we've got a bit more work to do before we launch internationally," he says. "If I translate the website into French and a customer reads it and needs to ring customer service about something, I don't have anyone who speaks French on the customer service end." But for now, it's spreading the word to Londoners that when it comes to diamonds, there's a new kid in town.

ALICE HORLICK, Aevha London

WITH A MOTHER and father both in high powered financial roles, one would assume a career in the City was a foregone conclusion for Alice Horlick.

Her mother – Nicola "Superwoman" Horlick – was famous in the 1990s as a woman who successfully "had it all"; the top job at a multi-million pound investment company, a large house in the country, a husband and six children. On top of juggling all this, Nicola had to cope with a critically ill child. Her eldest daughter, Georgie, lost a ten-year battle with leukemia in 1998, aged 12.

But Alice Horlick, 27, launched Aevha London (Alice Emma Victoria Horlick Accessories), a luxury handbag company, in September 2013, much to the surprise of her mother.

"My mum was a bit non-plussed about it initially, but she's come round," she tells me from her home in Richmond.

"People tend to think it's a lot more difficult to make it in a certain kind of industry. It was a no-brainer for me. I always knew I wanted to work for myself, but it was like 'OK, in which industry?'"

Horlick attended St Paul's Girls School in Brook Green, and found her all-rounder intelligence made career decisions more difficult.

"I never 100 per cent knew what I wanted to do because I was always as good at sciences and maths as I was at art, so it was kind of a tricky decision of which road to take. I didn't want to become an artist. So when I found fashion I thought, this is a way I can be creative but also create something commercial and have a business out of," she says.

Horlick certainly displays creativity in her vibrant designs, but it's her business acumen and ambition paired with steely determination that reminds you who her mother is.

"I actually studied womenswear initially, but then I started using leather quite early on and realised that I preferred leather as a medium and not having the restrictions of having to work around the female form. Clothes are a bit restrictive in that sense, with handbags you have that structural, sculptural freedom to do anything, so I think that's what I liked about it."



Serena tote by Aevha London

