

## JCI United Kingdom Case Study

*Developing tomorrow's leaders .....today*

### Kay Croot, Director of Merchandising and Space, Boots

In 1995 I joined ASDA at the age of 28 as a buyer in Leeds. Nine years later, I became the Health and Beauty Business Unit Director for ASDA Walmart, responsible for a business of over £700m, before moving to be Director of Merchandising and Space at Boots. It is no coincidence that my rise in ASDA was accompanied by a growing involvement in Junior Chamber International. **It is this voluntary organisation that has given me the confidence, leadership and management skills that I have been able to take back into the workplace to help me progress.**

I moved to Huddersfield at the same time I started work at ASDA. On joining Kirklees Junior Chamber, I quickly became involved, firstly in attending the training and business sessions and then getting involved in a major community project – running the Lord Mayor's Parade. After a period of eight months, I took on the role of Project Manager for organising a Superteams Competition, which involved getting local companies to participate in various activities. It was a great success and really boosted my confidence! After then I never looked back, becoming more involved, until I became local President in 1998.

As President I was able to develop any new skills that were easily transferable to my workplace. I had to speak in front of audiences of 200 people, lead a team of council members who helped me in the organisation of the chamber programme and get involved in PR and Marketing as well as project management. I also had many opportunities to network with other local businesses and local dignitaries and learnt best practice from many of these. It was at this time that I also gained a promotion at work to Category Manager, the first time I had led a team of people at work. **I am convinced it was my experience in Junior Chamber that gave me the confidence to take this role on.**

Being an ambitious person I decided that there was still a great deal I could learn from Junior Chamber so I put my name forward for National Director of Personal Development for British Junior Chamber (BJC) in 1999. My year in office provided me with many more chances to network, this time on a national and international scale as I began travelling to Junior Chamber International conferences. I was now well and truly committed and, in 2001, was elected National President of British Junior Chamber for the year 2000.

This year, in particular, holds some of my fondest and most challenging memories. As National President I worked closely with a team of 12 people and, together, we achieved great things including the first growth in membership for five years. On a personal note I developed more confidence, began to enjoy public speaking and was able to be a much more effective leader both in Junior Chamber and at work. I was then invited to take on an international role and in 2002, was in charge of Growth and Development in Europe as well as being Training Commissioner. This meant that I was on hand to advise the Junior Chamber National Presidents of the 36 countries in Europe about growth, development and training. The international side of Junior Chamber adds another fantastic dimension to membership. During the last 8 years I have travelled the world to Japan, Manila, Cannes, Barcelona, Las Vegas, Hawaii and Monte Carlo, meeting members from other Junior Chambers and learning more about their customs and traditions.

I have so much to thank Junior Chamber for. It has given me tremendous confidence – in my own ability and in specific areas such as public speaking and decision-making. It has also challenged me to keep pushing the boundaries further in my career and in my own personal development. The great thing about it is that you get so much support and encouragement from other members – I would never have considered running for National President were it not that so many people offered me their support and told me that I was capable of taking on such a role. It has given me the opportunity to learn new skills, to try out different activities in a safe environment, to network on an international and local level, to put something back into the local community.

In particular it has given me the leadership skills that I need to take my career forward – learning to motivate and lead a team on a voluntary basis enabled me to be much more effective at work. In a retail environment, leadership is a vital ingredient as you often have responsibility for large groups of people from an early stage in your career. Upon promotion you quickly needed to establish yourself in a leadership role in a new environment. My work at ASDA brought me into contact with people across the organisation on a daily basis – customers, colleagues in store, external contractors and main board members – and the ability to speak to anyone about anything is something I have learned in Junior Chamber.

At the end of 2004, after almost 10 years with ASDA, I was offered the opportunity to take on a new challenge as Director of Merchandising and Space with Boots. Again my Junior Chamber experience was very useful and the self-confidence it has helped me develop helped me take the decision to take up this new post. I am sure that I will be putting lots of things into practice at Boots that I have learnt, not only from my career in ASDA, but from my experiences with Junior Chamber.

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