

#MonthlyMotivation: Jess Hitchen (class of 2009)

Entrepreneur Jess is the proud owner of her own Luxury Chalet Business, [Morgan Jupe](#), in the Portes du Soleil region of the French and Swiss Alps.



Jess' grandfather ran a variety of businesses in London, and from the age of 6 she would help in his café, Guys & Dolls. She recalls: "I served ice cream at the weekends and remember thinking it was so much fun. It always stuck with me [so] from an early age I knew that I wanted to follow in his footsteps and forge a career in the hospitality industry."

After a role as an Assistant Manager in hospitality, having always had a passion for skiing, Jess could no longer resist the pull of a ski season. She left to work in France for the winter season. She shares: "it seemed like a natural step as I absolutely love skiing and have been skiing since the age of two. Whilst working for a company in Meribel as a Chalet Host and Chef, it soon became apparent to my partner and I that we wanted to start our own business." On returning to England they set up their business

plan, and after a lot of research and preparation, they followed the 'call of the mountains' to Morzine in 2012.

Jess explains "After using our contacts to find a property to lease in Morzine for the upcoming winter season, I set about creating a website for our new company, Morgan Jupe." Both Jess and her boyfriend were aware of the need to compete in an already busy market, so they set about creating their own unique selling point, combining the business with their passion for food and wine.

"My 12 years at Putney taught me to be confident in my own abilities and that gave me the confidence to step outside my comfort zone when I needed to. I was always encouraged in a very positive way by all of my teachers to be independent and not to give up when things got tough, something that I have found to be extremely useful when facing the many challenges of running my own business!"

So what have some of those challenges been? Before taking charge as Director of Sales and Marketing, Jess' biggest challenge was having the confidence to sell her own product, "this was something I had never done before and I didn't feel that comfortable with it, selling my first holiday gave me the only boost I needed to persevere. Receiving such great feedback from guests during our first winter made me realise that I must be doing something right!"

At times, Jess has also found it challenging being a young female employer, saying "not everyone is comfortable with the idea of having a boss who is younger than them and also female." However, it is clear that this has not held Jess back with Morgan Jupe now entering their sixth year of business with a portfolio of eight properties and a team of nine staff.

So what is Jess' advice for budding entrepreneurs out there? She recommends, "Make sure you do plenty of research before launching your business, gain plenty of experience working for other people within the industry before going at it alone. The knowledge you can gain from seeing how other businesses operate is invaluable, even if it's just to show you what not to do!"

Jess emphasises "To run your own business you need to have a huge amount of passion, patience and determination in order to be successful."