



Erica Da Veiga

Partner 28 East Group

As a partner of 28 East Group Erica Da Veiga has channeled her boundless energy and dynamism into creating one of Europe's most exciting young, independent aviation companies.

“Diversification makes this business so interesting,” she tells me as we chat at MEBA 2012, where along with business partners Luca Madone and Jeffrey Emmenis, she has ratified an agreement to form iFuel in partnership with JetAeroFuels and Open Aero. Swiss-based 28 East Group is the holding company for SkyDragon, an interiors app business that lets aircraft completions managers communicate in real time the latest status of the project directly to the client; 28 East Services providing aviation consultancy services;

and Vertis Aviation a provider of luxurious charters. With so much going on it's hard to believe that 28 East Group has only just marked its second anniversary. For Erica it's even more surprising she finds herself settled in Switzerland.

A GIRL FROM NAMIBIA

“I arrived in Basel 14 years ago planning to head home after a year in Europe. However I was looking for work and unexpectedly found an industry to which I became addicted,” she says ex-

plaining how a girl born in Namibia ended up a successful Swiss-based business woman. “I needed to work in an English speaking role as my German was minimal, and a friend recommended a job at Jet Aviation. It was the first time I saw aircraft interiors specifically tailored for an owner, it was fascinating. I knew nothing about business aviation but immediately knew this was for me. Through sheer persistence I persuaded Jet to give me the job, despite my lack of obvious qualifications.” The same passion took her to Pilatus

Aircraft where she became a Key Account Manager in the aircraft trainer division. “It was a male dominated environment and tough for a young woman,” she says smiling, “I remember being assigned an Asian airforce client who when he met me asked ‘shouldn’t you be in school?’ It required determination and an amount of stubbornness to be taken seriously. However I proved to him, and myself, that I could manage even the trickiest of client.”

Raised in Namibia and of Portuguese ancestry Erica says running a company is in the family DNA with her mum a successful business owner. However it wasn’t until she ran the charter department of a global charter firm that she gained the confidence to realize her dream. “The challenge of maintaining the client base, dealing directly with the CEO, making strategic decisions, and developing the revenue stream, all contrived to feed the desire for my own business.” Glaronia the first company she had joint ownership of, was launched just a year later.

TENACITY

“Working alone, in a small office, with one aging Global to charter, and a limited marketing budget there were a number of times I questioned the decision. I’d had one year’s experience in the charter market so only had a small network and it seemed I faced a plethora of challenges.” Not to be defeated Erica combined her charming nature with tenacity and participated in numerous networking events, soon building an impressive client portfolio. By focusing obsessively on details, closely monitoring charter activity, and forging strong broker relationships, Glaronia built a solid reputation for being reliable, cost-effective and professional. “I even had brokers saying ‘when I book with you guys I know I can sleep at night’. As a small company I could be flexible providing what I wanted, how I wanted, and when



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I wanted. It was liberating, enabled me to build on the foundations of my experience and allowed me to continually improve service. By September 2009 alongside the Global she was selling charters on the Airbus from Acropolis Aviation and the Falcon 7X from Triair, both based at Farnborough.

VERTIS AVIATION

Like many entrepreneurs she recognizes an excellent opportunity. When Luca and Jeffrey approached with the prospect of becoming partners she saw the huge potential. “They were former colleagues who I had always respected so it seemed a positive move to develop Glaronia into Vertis Aviation with them. We still focus on the original concepts and values, which aim to really learn about the client’s requirements and fulfill them each time. Putting this into practice means we have maintained a boutique approach that the clients value. Vertis privileged services now include on board chefs, sommeliers and butlers.

ROOM FOR EXPERIMENTATION

Only in her early thirties Erica Da Veiga has worked for some of Europe’s leading aviation companies, has developed an internationally respected aviation portfolio and is driving the young face of European business aviation together with her partners. So what next I ask her, “Well one of the joys of 28 East Group is that every day presents something new to learn. Take iFuel, that’s a whole new area for us so we are all brushing up on our fuel terminology. We’ve spent two years developing the business but being small and versatile, there’s still room for experimentation and we’re constantly exploring new ideas for the portfolio. I’m really very fortunate to be with the group.” Yes she is, but not through any lack of self - motivation, determination, persistence and delightful charm. ■