



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Changing hats

by Stephanie Caunter

2014 ... ah! A new year, the promise of exciting things to come, new sights to see, experiences to be had.

Or is it?

Let's take a look back at my 2013. Over the blur of Christmas and New Year celebrations and too much good food, I had almost forgotten what it was like. How short our memories truly are!

Thinking back, I must say it was a truly fantastic year for me. At work, our marketing and communications team really gelled — we produced some great results and had lots of firsts. I saw some bright stars shine in my team, which made me really proud. It was one of our great years. We had to work really hard, but it was ultimately satisfying.

On the personal front, I had lots of short but really enjoyable and memorable holidays with my family.

Our daughter grew from a baby to a full-blown toddler. It's been amazing watching her development at every stage of the way. She's now speaking in almost full sentences. Just a year ago, she couldn't even walk!

So with such a fulfilling year behind me, I have to admit it's a little hard to get all charged up about this new one. What can I do to leave a mark, to satisfy my own sense of achievement, to meet or beat last year's accomplishments?

It occurred to me that I should start something new. After all, I'm surrounded by entrepreneurs who are doing amazing things. Chief among them being my own husband and sister! Luckily, it's precisely because I'm married to a man who has his

own business that any illusions I have about starting my own business are quickly put to rest — it's just not me. Plus, I sincerely love what I'm doing now, and the firm and people I'm with.

This leads me to remember the many half-baked dreams I've had over the years. I used to be a real gym bunny and was addicted to Step classes for several years. I toyed with the idea of becoming a certified trainer. I knew I was good enough. After all, a friend and I once won an aerobics competition!

But somehow, I never got around to it. Stopping me was a lack of confidence in my ability to pass the tests, and to get up in front of a class and lead it.

Then there was my idea of pursuing further education. I thought about getting an MBA from a prestigious university. I also considered applying for the Chevening Scholarship, which covers further studies in the UK. I know today that I'd probably stand a more than decent chance of getting that scholarship or into an MBA programme.

But today I've also got my daughter and a husband with a business. I can't uproot either one or leave them behind for 12 to 18 months. What stopped me when I was younger, care-free and single? Again, a lack of confidence in my abilities.

That's pretty sad. In my twenties, I let myself get away with less time and time again because of a fundamental lack of faith in myself. There wasn't any external or internal factor stopping me — just myself.

It's a good thing that I've got the wisdom and luxury of time to look back now at that period in my life.

Sure, I could have done better, but why regret it? From what I hear, many people in their twenties struggle with the same sort of issues. Not everyone knows immediately what they want to do. Or if they do know, they're often held back due to that lack of confidence I experienced.

So looking back now, I'm thankful that I found PwC. That I found a boss and a culture that has brought out some of the best in me. That I met and married a man who's always striving to do something bigger and greater, which inspires me all the time.

As a result, I've done a lot more in these past few years than when I was in my twenties.

I'm not one for resolutions. But if I were to make one for 2014, it would be to simply be at my best. To not let a lack of belief in myself stop me from living the dreams I have — no matter how small or silly, impossible or fantastical they may be.

I hope the same for the many young men and women out there. Don't hold yourself back from achieving the things you dream of. May your self-confidence come earlier in life rather than later. And if it doesn't, fear not — things almost always gets better. Happy 2014 everyone! **E**



Stephanie Caunter studied engineering but soon realised it wasn't meant for her. Today, she heads PwC Malaysia's marketing and communications team. She counts herself lucky to learn a bit more every day about being a better wife, daughter, sister, friend, mother and teammate.