



## PhD Horizons Conference 2017

### Panel 4A: Entrepreneurial and Consultancy

#### **Dr Eleanore Irvine, Business Development Manager, Biogelx**

*Biography:* Eleanore holds an MSc in Forensic and Analytical Chemistry and a PhD in Chemistry from the University of Strathclyde. Her PhD was sponsored by an industrial company and this meant she was aware, throughout, of the commerciality of her research. Following her doctoral studies, she secured an RSE Enterprise Fellowship, which provided business training and company fundraising experience and this enabled the [Biogelx](#) team to commercialise their academic research into the start-up company phase. The Fellowship. She was also a Saltire Fellow 2014-15, which allowed further business experience and classes at a business school in Boston, USA. Eleanore has acted as both Product Development Manager and Business Development Manager for Biogelx, which offers peptide hydrogels for 3D cell culture applications. Most of the staff at Biogelx have PhDs.

*Key messages:* A PhD is great preparation for working with an early-stage company, because you're used to getting things done yourself and you're adept at problem solving.

#### **Dr Elizabeth Vokurka, Chief Executive, Imaginary Plane**

*Biography:* Elizabeth completed her doctoral studies in Experimental High Energy Physics at the University of Manchester, following a BSc in Physics at the University of Illinois. She initially worked as a university Research Assistant. Recruitment agencies didn't know what to do with her, and she'd always been attracted to start-ups and SMEs. She worked as a corporate Imaging Scientist in Medical Imaging before embarking on a career as an intellectual property management and funding acquisition consultant, dealing with and writing patents. For legal protection, she incorporated herself and founded [Imaginary Plane](#) in 2010. This company provides intellectual property and intangible asset management services. Elizabeth has also recently taken on the role of Intellectual Property Manager with pureLiFi Ltd, a University of Edinburgh spinout optical wireless communications company. She also works as a retained firefighter and, since the turn of the century, has been a STEM question setter for the BBC's 'University Challenge' in her spare time.

*Key messages:* You are capable of anything.

#### **Dr Stephanie Terreni Brown: Senior Consultant, Cushman and Wakefield**

*Biography:* Stephanie completed her PhD and MRes in Geography at the University of Edinburgh, following an MSc in African Studies at the University of Oxford and undergraduate study at Durham University. Her interests in international development led to her writing a PhD thesis about water and sanitation (WATSAN) developments in Kampala,





Uganda. After this Stephanie worked as a Research Fellow at Edinburgh University, and it was at this stage that she decided to move away from academia. She loved researching for her PhD but felt that, to allow her research to make the greatest impact, she needed to be able to “speak the language” of the NGOs and governments who might put it into practice. This led her to consider consultancy. Since 2014 she has worked with [Cushman and Wakefield](#) (formerly DTZ Pleda Consulting) in a specialist Education Business Unit within this global property corporate. Her job seeking strategy involved drawing up a list of companies which seemed interesting and researching them thoroughly. Seeing a job advertised with Cushman and Wakefield, she made contact with them and discussed what she could offer, in effect shaping the role to suit her own skills. Her current focus as Senior Consultant is on international business strategy in the education sector, which sees her working with universities and schools across the world. Recently, for example, she has worked with University of Glasgow on plans for a recently-acquired piece of land. Her role involves liaising with senior management in client organisations, working on several different problems simultaneously and meeting client deadlines. The fast pace of this work came as something of a contrast to her previous roles. Stephanie maintains an active foothold in academia, and also does pro-bono consultancy work for a number of social enterprises that are engaged in international education and/or WATSAN projects.

*Key messages:* A PhD equips you with the ability to think critically at speed, and the confidence to ask questions. You’ll develop independence, resilience and time-management skills. Don’t assume that there isn’t a niche just right for you, even in large companies. Think broadly, beyond the confines of your research. Think strategically – plan ahead, and see the context. Network.

### Questions from the floor:

Q: *What funds does Biogelx utilise?*

- EI: Money from a small Angels syndicate; money from Scottish Enterprise (R&D funding); private equity.
- EV: If you can possibly run your company without external private investment, do so.

Q: *How did you all sell yourselves?*

- By talking to everyone – and listening to how other people sell themselves.
- By attending networking meetings held by Entrepreneurial Scotland.

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