

PubAffairs Profile

Name	Zoe Walker
Job Title	Corporate Affairs Manager
What academic /professional qualifications do you have?	MSc Econ (Hons) Strategic Studies — University of Wales, Aberystwyth BSc Econ (Hons) International Relations - University of Wales, Aberystwyth
How did you get into Public Affairs?	I completed my Masters and moved down to London where I took my civil service entrance exams whilst temping. I was offered a job at the Old Bailey (Central Criminal Court) within the LCD, but soon realised that the civil service was not for me. I then joined Westminster Strategy, a public affairs consultancy as PA to the Chairman and two Directors. I saw this role as a route in to the world of public affairs and was promoted to Account Exec level after a six-month break to go travelling. Ideally, I would have started my public affairs career on the client-handling side rather than on the administrative side. However, if your company can recognise this and give you client-handling experience it should not hold you back in any way. The knowledge of the industry and organisational skills that I learnt in the first year was invaluable later on in my career.
What others careers did you consider?	I had always wanted to work within the world of politics— initially for the FCO, as a journalist or within parliament although I did consider going into Law. I was also keen to find a position that would let me travel (ideally further than Blackpool and Bournemouth).
How did you get your current job?	Through a contact that I met at PubAffairs (honestly!) who knew about the job before it had been sent out to recruitment agencies.
What characteristics do you need to work in Public Affairs?	Outgoing, interested in current affairs (not just politics) and able to keep abreast of many subjects at the same time so that you can always discuss/advise people on the latest issues.
What skills are most important in your job?	Networking is a large part of the job so you need to like networking — or at least learn to like it. You also need to be business-minded as public affairs knowledge is not enough on its own if you want to advise your clients/colleagues/member organisations well. You must understand their business, their stakeholders and how they are affected by government and not just the political process within parliament.
What does your current role entail on a day to day basis?	Issuing any press statements and response letters to the media giving our or representing our companies view of all smoking issues. Managing our Youth Access Prevention programme that promotes Citizencard. Developing and maintaining a network of contacts on a European level, with my member companies, UK government departments, parliamentarians and other stakeholders. Organisation of Party Conferences and other networking events takes up a large part of my time too.
Which campaign that you have worked on are you most proud of?	It is very early days in my current role, however, we have been active in the public places smoking debate. Although smoking is a difficult issue on which to raise support and encourage balanced debate we have achieved lots of coverage

	depicting our views on this around the UK.
How do you go about making contacts?	I try to use every event/lunch/reception I attend as an opportunity to meet new people who will eventually become useful contacts. It is useful to check the attendance list on arrival and work out who you need to speak to/meet before leaving. Never be intimidated by meeting new people as most people find it difficult and are always happy to chat to you, especially if they are on their own. Sometimes the hardest part is getting away from them! Once you have met someone, always contact them shortly after and maintain the relationship before they have forgotten who you are or what you were talking about.
How has networking at PubAffairs helped you?	It helped me get my current job, which is quite a result. It has also provided me with an opportunity to meet other people interested in public affairs in a very informal setting — which encourages talking and not always about work! From meeting people at PubAffairs I find that I now always know some people at every event I attend which really helps in my job. Plus the people I have met can all offer great advice at every level as they work in such a variety of roles.
What advice would you give to anyone looking to break into Public Affairs?	Think about everyone you know either through university/friends/family and work out if they have any connections to the public affairs industry that you could utilise. As with any industry it especially helps to know someone to make your first step, but this is particularly pertinent in public affairs as it is such a small industry. Gain as much experience as you can initially — even if you have to work as an intern or earning just expenses. Interns/work experience people are often kept on, or invited back in the next holiday so it is very worthwhile. Any student who manages to work in their preferred sector through their holidays will always have an edge over someone who hasn't made the effort to do this.