

ConQuest

When practice makes perfect.

by Meryl Westlake

CONQUEST - THE FIRST LONG -STANDING POLISH CONSULTING ORGANISATION RUN BY STUDENTS - IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF WHY STUDENTS NEED NOT BE RESTLESS OR HOPELESS WHILST THEY STUDY.

Testing the maxim that practice is as useful an educative method as theoretical learning, the now widely respected and established agency brought together a group of entrepreneurial spirits determined to turn ideas into reality whilst strengthening their career prospects.

Before, volunteer placements gave students the opportunity to gain experience, but as the economic downturn reduces opportunities and unpaid internships become unrealistic, so the prospects for initiatives like ConQuest are strengthened.

ConQuest is first of all a channel for theory to be put into practice, and an opportunity to become actively involved in the working environments of the consulting industry. Perhaps it represents the model for the future as youth embrace entrepreneurship to wrestle back control.

One Step Ahead of the Game

Since 1998 ConQuest has set out to achieve its objective of providing an international service of the highest quality, while being run by students. It has been assisted by the Warsaw School of Economics combining youth with experience to ensure there is no doubt over its ability to deliver this objective.

Students are naturally inventive and use creative approaches to tackle solutions according to ConQuest's PR Manager, Mateusz Dalek, who attributes their success to "working with passion."

"And [the] fact that we are open for new ideas gives us power" he says, alluding to the potent idea that the company flourishes by employing youth fresh from university armed with cutting-edge academic information, but without the

indoctrination of business protocols that can sometimes reduce innovative thought.

ConQuest has consulted on over 300 wide-ranging national and international projects in 11 years - ranging from food-market analysis to foreign-investment guidance. And because ConQuest remains 'not for profit', it attracts big name firms looking for high quality service with social business commitments.

Where students - and their ideas - shine

What is so unique and appealing about ConQuest from a student's perspective is the values by which it is underpinned.

ConQuest's own internal mission is to place respect on student consulting and quality service.

It does this by ensuring individual

treatment on every project. Avoiding standardised solutions and treating each assignment on its own merit keeps student consultants on their toes and provides fresh challenges every day.

Teamwork, friendship, and promotion of a culture of entrepreneurship create an environment of idea-interchange, creative delegation and self-management. Dalek describes working with ConQuest as "experience in a pill".

International Recognition

ConQuest has won the 'eXcellence Award' from the European Confederation of Junior Enterprises (JADE) on three occasions. It can also boast of the International Project Standard which JADE awards to international projects that are of the very best quality.

Such widespread recognition has propelled student-run consulting to the front of the agenda in Poland and ConQuest now



finds itself amongst other student-led initiatives, including YPI and Consulex Law IT Consulting.



With Polish clients like Iglotech and Hanza's, and the endorsement of institutions like Business Network International, it is unsurprising that Microsoft, Shell and Johnson & Johnson now do business with ConQuest. The endorsement of ConQuest by Siemens as a 'partner worthy of trust' sums up just how far this student project has come.

With continuing recognition of ConQuest's innovation and professionalism the firm hopes to act as a beacon for young entrepreneurs willing to make a difference and attempt something new.

RESOURCE BOX

ConQuest Consulting
Martyna Wilk
martyna.wilk@jadepoland.org
www.conquest.pl

JADE
www.jadenet.org
The European confederation of junior enterprises

Young Business Net
www.youngbusiness.net
An online system that supports sustainable youth enterprise programs and develops and promotes good practice across Europe.

European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs
www.yes.be
The association of young entrepreneurs throughout Europe; representing 40,000 members and focusing on the economic and social performance of young entrepreneurship in Europe.

YES Youth Entrepreneurship and Sustainability
www.yesweb.org
The YES Campaign strives to build the individual capacity of youth in order to create sustainable livelihoods and establish an entrepreneurial culture among young people.

Youth Business International
www.youthbusiness.org
A not-for-profit organisation that leads a global network of independent country initiatives helping young people start their own business.

Social Enterprise Europe Ltd.
www.socialenterpriseeurope.co.uk
Social Enterprise Europe Ltd. provides services to develop and support Social Enterprise working with partners across Europe.



Top left: ConQuest at work
Bottom left: the ConQuest team at the JADE Excellence Awards 2010
Above: Matusz Ogonowski, ConQuest president



Meryl Westlake

An undergraduate degree in Literature steered Meryl towards an MSc in International Relations and thereby finding a practical way to consolidate two passions- communication and international affairs. Growing up in an international household gave birth to an obsession with travelling, adventure and eating the weirdest food on the menu. Working for the Aegis Trust has sparked her interest in conflict journalism and in cultural relations of all types. She currently lives in Nottingham, England.