

The Promotion People

Lesley Diana learned enough from her past lives to build a company from the ground up.



It was the pieces of things that helped Lesley Diana create the public relations package known as The Promotion People. Hosting a Saskatchewan-based talk TV talk show for 11 years helped her with on set interviews and preparing her clients to work with media. Owning a chain of women's retail stores encouraged fashion designers and major brands to hire her to oversee their national publicity.

She had enough confidence in her skills to start her own company in 1994 and several years later went on to do unit publicity for independent BC-shot movies, including Rampage Entertainment's *Christina's House*, Rodney Dangerfield's *My Five Wives*, Keystone Entertainment's *Air Bud*, Bruce Sweeney's *Last Wedding* as well as Prophecy's *Ripper*, *The Barber* and *Bloodsuckers*. She has done EPK interviews on set with many high profile actors including Jerry

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Stiller, Brooke Shields, Peter Coyote, Wendy Crewson, Oscar nominee Abigail Breslin, Malcolm McDowell, Kevin Zegers, Kevin Dillon and Tom Green.

However, it was the personal touch that has made The Promotion People one of the country's more high profile public relations companies. One of her first clients was Bo Svenson who told her that Canadians are too polite to get press and promote themselves. He told her that Hollywood is a star system and publicity is all part of the requirement to raise an actor's profile enough to allow producers, directors and the audience to notice them.

"The Promotion People is filling a void as very few local companies specialize in personal publicity" she says. "Personal publicity is different than unit publicity but most of the publicists who work in this market are part of that profession."

In 2000, she completed her third film with Emmanuelle Vaugier, who then asked her to be her personal publicist. Within six years Vaugier was appearing in recurring roles in two of the top-rated shows on television, *Two and a Half Men* and *CSI: NY*. Vaugier, who still works with Diana, opened the doors to other Canadian actors looking to move on to bigger things. Cory Monteith was working with Diana when he was hired to star on *Glee*, while Diana also played a part in the careers of *Corner Gas*'s Gabrielle Miller and Fred Ewanick, as well as many of Canada's top 100 actors including Cle Bennett, Amanda Crew, Nicole Oliver, Ali Liebert, John Cassini, Wes 'Maestro' Williams, Ben Ratner, Chelah Horsdal and April Telek.

"Our clients keep coming back whenever they have new television shows and movies being released. Most of our new clients have been either recommended by our clients or their agents. I think that what thrills us most is when our clients get a big interview and the articles or TV show comes out. All our actors are so appreciative of what we do for them. It is very rewarding."

By 2006, The Promotion People had become too busy to stay a one woman operation. Diana hired publicist Jasmyn Pozzo, who heads up the press department and added Tybie Lipetz to manage social media three years later. This has enabled the company to also work with television shows being released.

They scored a coup last year when the JetSet Crew was looking for a partner to run their Red Carpet at the Canvas Lounge during the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. (They had already worked together on events for the Vancouver International Film Festival.) By the time the games had ended The Promotion People had become inextricably linked to the image of the parties of the Olympics with high profile local actors mingling with Canada's gold medalists and international press every night.

It was a great ride, admits Diana, one that has continued into 2011. "These last few years have arguably been our best," she says. "We have garnered clients from Miami and New York and many actors based in the Canadian centres. We are always busy introducing clients to the media at the Toronto and Vancouver film festivals."

She says that one of the most memorable moments was watching Monteith become a star. "Cory had to stop by the side of the road to do interviews in his car on the way to his audition for *Glee*. Then when he got the call saying he had landed the role we were so excited for him. And it reaffirmed that having press can often make or break the booking of a lead role, especially in the U.S. We have always said 'we are here to help.' ■