



# PICK YOURSELF

#SELFSTARTERSTORIES



## Self-Starter Stories: From Vintage Fair Organising To Founding A Private Dining Events Company

By: [Nadine Burzler](#)

This week's #selfstarterstory features Natalie Cobb. Founder of Private Dining London, an events company that sources the most unique and exciting venues in London.

**'Private Dining London is an exciting prospect, working closely with corporate and private clients to deliver exciting events in restaurants, venues and homes in London and surrounding areas.'**

#PICKYOURSELFUK CAUGHT UP WITH NATALIE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT HER ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY.



**Looking back, what lead you to be where you are today?:** Food. I always put food first, what can I say!?! That and my love of leadership and organisation. Mix them all together and you get Private Dining London.

**What was the most challenging part of starting a business?:** The hardest part has to be the heaviness of decision-making because everything you do, say or actions you take have a consequential effect on the business financially or strategically. Doing this alone is the challenging part. As a solo founder, there is no one else to turn to or to support you from within the business so it can be difficult at times.

**What did you want to be when you were a child?:** Forensic Scientist. Mainly because I loved watching detective programmes on TV so caught the bug for problem-solving and science but soon realised that my creativity would lead me to other paths.

**What was your last job?:** Before starting the business I worked in the events and admin department for an independently owned, high-end City restaurant in London. My role involved sales, marketing, operations, customer service and business development.



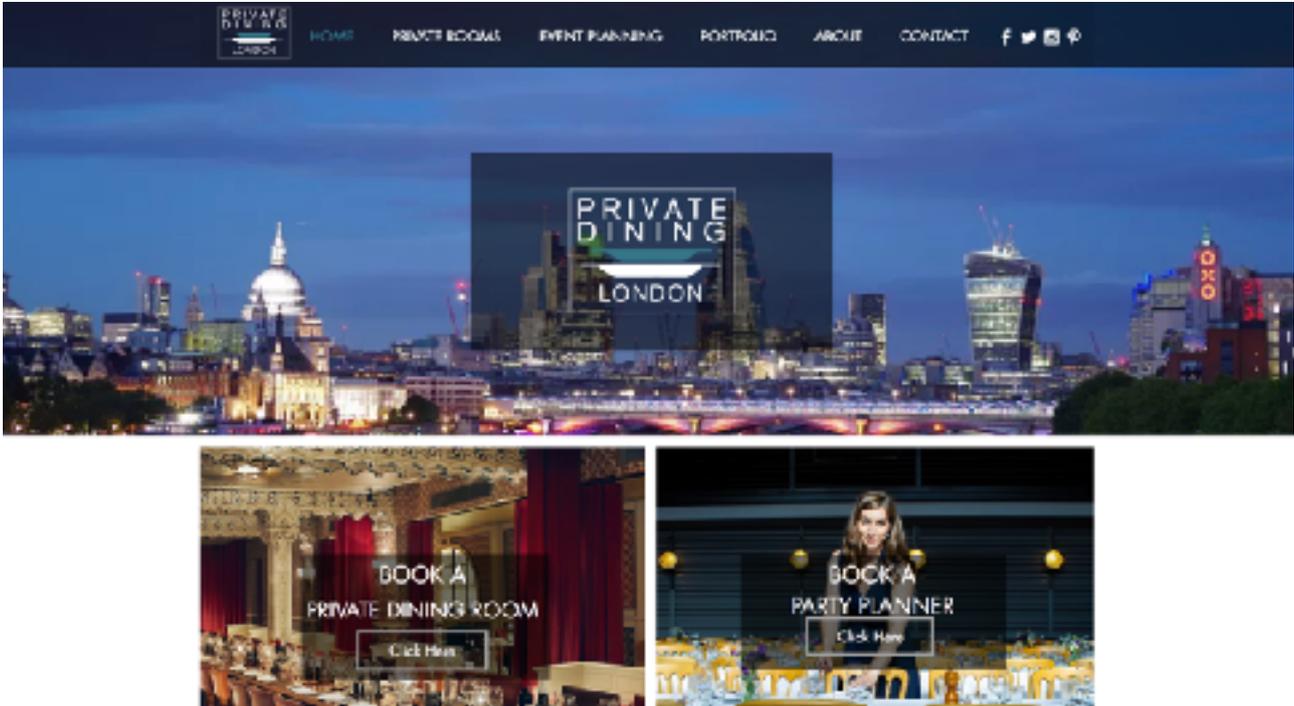
**When did you choose to PICK YOURSELF instead of waiting to be chosen by someone else?:** I had some strong business figures in my life growing up and admired their initiative, determination and deserving success so this had inspired my entrepreneurial streak from an early age. Following a number of years in antiques and vintage fair organising and hospitality, I wanted to make a name for myself in the events industry and to not be dictated by the constraints of senior figures, ageism and lack of creativity. So I picked to become a founder, I picked to start a business in a competitive industry and I pick myself to continue!

**What did you learn from your worst boss?:** A number of things really... always listen and trust others until you are fully informed. NEVER make anyone feel small or that they cannot achieve something.

**What is your favourite business book and why?:** Having read a number of business books my time is somewhat limited at the moment so I'd like to recommend Courier magazine. It's full of entrepreneur stories, issues and interesting content so are perfect for people on the go or with demanding schedules.



**Do you do everything yourself? What do you outsource?:** My talents lie in strategy, marketing and operations but I'm pretty good at admitting where my strengths lie so have outsourced where needed. To save time at the beginning I outsourced the website build but do this myself now.



Private Dining London Website July 2017

The first thing I outsourced was my accounting because I don't have any knowledge in this area and I have recently outsourced a designer because the business is about to go through a re-branding.

**What is your productivity secret?:** Every day I create a "To Do List" and target each point on the list. The satisfaction of crossing each point out keeps me productive. I know this is quite basic but it works!

**What is your favourite app?:** Outlook Mail and iPhone Notes. I'm always on the go so they really help to stay on top of things.

**How do you market your business?:** Social media is very important in the event industry so this is one of my main marketing channels. Networking and recommendation is imperative. Nothing beats human interaction because it creates trust between myself and the clients. I go to 2 or 3 networking events a week. I play around with Google Adwords but sometimes this can be far too expensive with not enough returns.



### Ritz Carlton London Events

**When you first launched, how did you get your first paying customers?:** Google Adwords. My first paying customer came through Google Adwords campaigns and it was a couple looking for a planner for their wedding vow renewal. Following their event, we are good friends and one of them is now a business mentor of mine!

**How did you get your first traffic to your website?:** Google Adwords. As an unknown brand, Google is the hardest challenge and paid advertising is the only way to be seen. The business is now higher on the search engines so is not so reliant on AdWords.

**What would you say to someone who is toying with the idea to start a business but haven't yet?:** Have a clear idea of where your idea stands. How is it different? Who are your clients? What are you selling? Do your research and think about your marketing strategy to make sure you are clear on what needs to be achieved when you start. Have separate finances for the business and your personal life with money in both pots so that you can dip in when needed. Your personal savings need to have at least 6 months of living costs for you to fall back on. When you start, surround yourself with positive entrepreneurs or people who understand your ambitions, these people will be invaluable.

**If you could have dinner with one entrepreneur, who would it be and why?:** Lily Simpson who founded The Detox Kitchen because she is a solo founder and I'd love to hear her best tips on marketing, expansion and day-to-day solo survival!