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MORE ABOUT ME

After working for over 12 years as a lawyer and a human resources manager, I took a sabbatical, which changed my life. I decided to follow my passions in life, which are travelling, writing and being a tour guide in Ghent.

In the fall of 2010, I founded my own company, Ghent-Authentic (www.ghent-authentic.com), an innovative tour guiding company in Ghent that combines top quality tour guiding with excellent service, flexibility and above all a personal approach. Ghent-Authentic is specialized in private customized tours/programs for business and for pleasure. The Ghent-Authentic slogan '*Think global, feel local*' says it all!

To accomplish all that, I surround myself with a great team of 8 freelancers (7 of which are women!) who, besides being high-profiled tour guides, have professional careers as architects, meteorologists, HR-consultant, IT-managers and so on. All tour guides are fluent in several languages, are well-travelled and have business experience.

I live alternately in Ghent and in New York City where I keep on following my other passion, which is writing. When I am in New York I run Ghent-Authentic from a distance thereby relying on great technology (internet, skype and so on) but above all on a great Ghent-Authentic team!

Since January 2011, I am engaged by the European Commission as a '*European Female Entrepreneurship Ambassador*', to be a role model for so many intelligent, competent women out there who despite their often high level of education and resources, still believe they are not capable of running their own business. Of course they can!

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1/ 2010 – present:

- Owner/Manager Ghent-Authentic (www.ghent-authentic.com)
- European Female Entrepreneurship Ambassador

2/ 2006-2010: sabbatical, studying, travelling, writing, doing all kinds of temporary jobs, in short following my passions in life and living life to the fullest!

For over 12 years I worked first as a lawyer then as a lawyer/human resources manager at Colruyt, one of the biggest supermarket companies in Belgium. On top of that I was combining my job one day a week, with a part-time assignment as a judge at the labor court of Ghent.

Although my job was everything one could hope for as a lawyer, I found myself over the years less and less challenged and more and more trapped in a routine of daily meetings and negotiations and, most importantly, I realized that my world had narrowed itself to the world of the company.

I needed to break out so I decided at the end of 2005 to take a sabbatical and go where life would take me.

For months I travelled to far away and often remote places in Patagonia, Myanmar, Iceland and so on. Back in Belgium I did all kinds of jobs regardless of my degrees or cv and regardless whether **there was some kind of coherency between them. That's how I found myself one day judging at the labor court in the morning – which I occasionally still did – and driving tourist boats on the canals in the afternoon.** It was a great combination, I thought ☺

In the evenings I would work in a bar, study or write.

I chose to take up the 3-year program to become a licensed tour guide in Ghent. I always had been interested in history, art and languages and it just felt like the right thing to do at that time. I graduated as a licensed tour guide Dutch/French/English in June 2010.

What my writing was concerned, I decided to follow a friends' advice to finally do something with my writing instead of limiting myself to funny stories 'just for friends'. So I registered at one of the few writing courses I knew of which was a screenwriting course for beginners in Brussels. The least I can say is that the course triggered me to write more in that extend that soon I submitted some of my material into writing competitions (screenwriting/short story writing/poetry) in Belgium and abroad and it finally paid of.

In 2007 I won a modest competition in Barcelona and in 2008 I won a grant from the Flemish Audiovisual Foundation to write a screenplay. I took it as a sign to take my writing seriously, left everything and everyone behind and went to NYC where I took up screenwriting and short story writing at NYU. As a new and fascinating world was opening up to me, the initial 4 months became 7 months and now I am hooked as well to writing as to New York;)

Then I tried to figure out how to combine my passion for travelling and for NYC with my passion for writing and make ends meet at the same time?

So I came up with the idea to set up my own tour guiding company in order to give me the flexibility as well as the money to write and travel or if not at least be surrounded by travelers who are visiting Ghent.

On the airplane in April 2010, on my way back from New York, I sketched out a business plan for **what would become in October 2010 'Ghent-Authentic', a tour guiding company specialized in private and customized tours for those who want to discover Ghent in a personal and authentic way. 'Think global, feel local' is the Ghent-Authentic slogan as I want visitors, whether it is for business or for pleasure, truly feel at home in Ghent.** More at www.ghent-authentic.com.

In the following months 8 fellow students joined me to freelance for Ghent-Authentic and now the business is catching on. In the meanwhile I keep on working on my screenplay and on my short stories and traveling to New York City as well as to other parts of the world.

c/ 1999-2006: Human resources manager Colruyt/part-time judge at the labour court of Ghent

Colruyt is a major player in Belgium's retail network and employs about 20,000 people all over Belgium, France, Luxemburg and the Netherlands.

As a human resources manager I was mainly advising and supporting the CEO and managers of the IT & engineering departments on a wide range of issues related to human resources management: from strictly legal matters, to negotiating with unions, to developing new communication strategies. Apart from that I also worked with the employees on an individual level.

On top of that I combined my job one day a week, with a part-time assignment as a judge at the labor court of Ghent.

e/ 1995-1999: Solicitor & assistant at the labor law department of the University of Ghent

After finishing my law studies, I started working as a solicitor at the bar of Ghent. I combined this with a part-time assisting job at the labor law department of the University of Ghent.

EDUCATION

a/ 2009-2010: Screenwriting & Short Story Writing at New York University (NYU)

b/ 2008-2010: Licensed tour guide, speciality art city Ghent, at 'Het Perspectief' College in Ghent

I took up the 3-year program to become a licensed tour guide in Ghent. I always had been interested in history, art and languages. I graduated as a licensed tour guide Dutch/French/English in June 2010.

c/ 2006-2010: Spanish

One of my travels led me to Argentina where I got fascinated by tango and by Spanish. I took up both and continued to do so once I got back in Belgium.

d/ 1994-1995: European Master in Law and Economics

After finishing law school I was accepted into the European post graduate 'Law & Economics' program.

I was taking the program both at the Universities of Hamburg (Germany) and Leiden (The Netherlands).

e/1989-1994: Law school at the University of Ghent

At law school I majored in labor law.

f/ 1983 – 1989: Latin-Science at the Sint-Bavo college in Ghent

LANGUAGES

I am fluent in Dutch, English and French (oral and written) and have a proficient knowledge of German and Spanish.