



'As much a test of emotional steeliness'

The Apprentice Week 3

BY JOANNE SWEENEY-BURKE

It's hard to believe that three weeks have passed in this year's **The Apprentice**, but harder to believe that I've bagged three wins in a row. My initial fear of being fired by Bill Cullen in the first few weeks has now dissipated. However, that was quickly replaced with a fire in my belly to succeed. Now that I am there, I don't want to go home.

Arriving into Dublin on a 5am Bus Éireann red-eye for the very first episode was a trip I won't ever forget. Bags in tow, best foot forward and game face on, I was entering the world of reality TV that would "make me or break me" – according to some commentators.

But it is a journey that very few people get to take in their lives. And believe me, it's a journey not for the faint-hearted.

However, for me that journey was not to become a TV star but more about building brand recognition for Media Box and demonstrating what can be done in a recession if you put your mind to it.

I wanted to use the show as an opportunity to prove that small business can succeed with the right attitude and supports around them.

And let's not forget, Media Box was declared a 'viable' business during the audition stages and pitched against some other excellent business minds. So I am very proud to be chosen as one of 16 candidates, allowing me bring Media Box and our skills to the attention of Bill Cullen.

This week I was moved to the younger team Spirit and I drafted in my experience to help them clinch their first victory.

It was nice to read a commendation from Jackie Lavin in the Irish Daily Mail describing Team Spirit's performance. "Joanne was the real leader there. The one who kept bringing (team leader) Louise back to the business plan, the target audience and trying to put some structure on it (the task)."

Meanwhile Panos Zambetakis, a finalist on last year's **The Apprentice**, says "Joanne is one to watch. But I think everyone is afraid of her." Panos has been very kind to me and has sent messages of support so I think he could be a fan!

I also topped TV3's Like-O-Meter poll for the second week in a row, snapping up 66 per cent of the public vote. I'm beginning to think my straight-talking is being recognised for exactly what it is!

This week also saw Tyrone-native Eoin Hamdam be the first person to ever fire themselves from the show, by walking out. Eoin felt the pressure as we all did, but couldn't cope with the glare of cameras, microphones, Jackie and Brian (Bill's eyes and ears) on his back 15 hours a day. So he decided to leave before he faced Bill in the boardroom.

Nobody will ever understand the intensity of the process; it is as much a test of emotional steeliness as it is business acumen. Being away from family and friends and being stripped of everything you own leaves you vulnerable and feeling almost naked so you just have to keep driving yourself forward with a positive mental attitude.

A ten-minute supervised telephone call once a week is the height of your communication with the outside world. Tough. Really tough.

Devising a mobile phone applica-

tion for UniSlim was a fun task, despite the fact 'we missed the opportunity to do something really creative and innovative' according to Bill.

But a win's a win and we are just happy to be in the race for task number four.

So with only 12 candidates remaining in the race to become Bill Cullen's business partner – it's all to play for. Tune in next Monday night to TV3 at 9:00pm to catch Episode 4 of **The Apprentice** 2011.

Seen www.facebook.com/media-box.



The Apprentice hopeful Joanne Sweeney-Burke.

Publication: Donegal News Derry People

Date: Friday, October 21, 2011

Page: 35

Extract: 2 of 2

Circulation: 11436

Author: JOANNE SWEENEY-BURKE

Headline: 'As much a test of emotional steeliness'



Student Council 2011 / 2012 at Loreto Community School, Milford are Dylan Hegarty, Aidan Hannigan, Barney Doherty, Caolan Blake, Liam Barrett, Andrea Logue, Anna Bonnar, Vinny Pyper, Roisin Carr, Aislinn Reid, Hanorah Hardy, Caomhnait Crossan, Sarah Sweeney.