

# 'THE APPRENTICE' Column

*with candidate Joanne Sweeney-Burke*



## The Apprentice Week 5 "Joanne Saved my Ass"

This week I bagged my fourth win out of five tasks and as I said in the "Behind the Scenes" show it was "my sweetest victory yet." To enter a reality TV show that showcases your business talents, or in some cases, exposes your lack of them, is a real risk.

Running a media company and knowing that my clients are watching this show and

wondering how I will perform is really scary. You want to impress them as much as you want to impress Bill.

This week we won the B&Q task which involved designing a billboard to promote their new Energy Saving Centre in the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre in Dublin. My concept "Unplug Yourself. It's Payback Time" was chosen and I was happy with the result. So when I saw the billboard banner drop in the RDS in Dublin during our presentation I felt proud that we had produced something that would win the task for us.

In the "Behind the Scenes Show" which is broadcast at midnight on TV3 my team mates were very kind to me. They acknowledged my contribution on the task which isn't sometimes evident from the main show. Maurice said, "Joanne you are a dream designer, marketer and leader."

When you impress your team you really know you are winning. And thanks to Project Manager Brian who said "Joanne saved my ass, and really drove this task over the line." And this is despite the fact that we fought like cats and dogs during this task, but we kept our

chins up and we kept it together to win it for the team.

If you don't have the respect of your team then it's difficult to achieve your vision. So to watch the compliments again on this week's show I have to admit, I felt a sense of pride rise to my throat.

And that got me thinking about running a business in the recession. It's not easy. In fact many days it would be easier to give up and give in. But that's not what a leader does. It's not what business people do. They fight, they work hard, they show passion and determination and most of all they usually do it for their families. I learned about business for the first time during my time in the Chamber of Commerce movement and have the utmost respect for anyone that runs their own business, especially in today's climate.

And as I said in the show, "doing what I do in Media Box is what feeds my kids." Make no mistake. It's as simple as that. And going on the The Apprentice risks my business reputation and all that I have built up over the past three years and even before that.

You will notice that my interviews are peppered with references to my husband and my kids, but while I was living in the 'lap of luxury' in North County Dublin, they were never far from my mind.

By the way I would like to officially say Happy Birthday to Media Box – we are now three years old and I am very proud of this milestone. Here's to another three or 33! I'm young enough!

This week saw the fifth woman fired from this year's "The Apprentice" which didn't sit well with me. While Bill has the last say, and after all it is his €200,000 at stake, I felt it sent a very strong message about the calibre of the women in this year's show, and I felt very disappointed.

I then began to worry about my own status in the show and with only three women remaining in the top 10 I was facing an uphill battle.

I got more great feedback from Jackie Lavin who wrote in this week's

Irish Daily Mail. "Joanne is a good, solid performer. She doesn't do anything crazy and she often reins the others in – she's still one to watch. She's a professional. She had literally minutes at the end to put the flyer together and the line she used – "cash in your lost energy" – was a good one, and a testament to her skills working under pressure." Thanks Jackie!

And I was delighted to see that B&Q used that strapline in their press ad in this week's Irish Daily Mail. So that's my third national campaign in just five weeks in The Apprentice. I am really building up a nice portfolio. But will it last? As each week passes, the pressure and the tasks get tougher and nobody is invincible in this process. One mistake and you could be gone.

But with only 10 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 6 of The Apprentice 2011 when we will be re-designing the Cadbury's Caramello wrapper.

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*How far will she go?*

**Tune in to TV3 every Monday night at 9:00pm**

