

Women at the top of their trade are often imagined to be tough calculating and thoroughly aggressive: Julie Ritter talks to a lady who may be on the high rung of her career ladder, but she's certainly dispels the hard hitting image...



A woman of substance

Women in senior management positions are often branded as tough cookies—determination oozes from their pores and to all outward purposes they're on a one way ticket to the top.

But this is where Elaine Jones, Managing Partner with Asteco Property Management differs somewhat. One of the few women at senior management level in the Dubai real estate business, you would hardly describe her as 'tough' yet one gets the distinct impression she doesn't suffer fools gladly.

And, while she is definitely determined, there is a side to her nature which will always ensure her feet are planted firmly on the ground and she won't lose sight of her principles.

Elaine arrived in Dubai eight years ago and initially started as a saleslady for a rival company before setting up Asteco with a colleague in 1985. "My experience as a saleswoman means I can sympathise enormously with my own team of salesgirls," she said.

Along with the slog, Elaine has also managed to keep her sense of humour through some of the more

adventurous times and has her share of real estate stories! She finds them funny now but at the time, they were exasperating situations, as she explained: "I once had arranged to meet a potential client outside a supermarket. I arrived on time greeted the chap and whisked him off to look at various properties. It wasn't until I dropped him back at the supermarket several hours and several properties later that he informed me of his true identity—he wasn't my client at all and had in fact been waiting for a taxi!"

All this behind her and now well established in the local property business, Elaine and her company are branching out into new areas of property management and development.

She is currently in the throes of a project that will satisfy a longed for need of Dubai citizens and which, at the same time, has to be the fastest construction project in Dubai.

Work on the new shopping complex 'The Center' in Muragabat, Deira side, began in March this year and is already scheduled for opening next month.

For a woman in such a senior

position there must be times when she has to work extra hard to prove herself here in the Middle East, but Elaine explains, "Luckily I don't have a problem with credibility because, after eight years here, I've built up a solid reputation and have the support of a strong local backing."

Elaine can remember all too well the difficulties she encountered when moving to a new country, and, drawing on this experience she has introduced a special Relocation Service for clients who rent her properties.

Away from office demands, Elaine is a fervent supporter of the charity-run Training Centre for Handicapped children for which she organises fundraising events. The Training Centre is for children up to 18 years of age of all nationalities and has recently expanded to include a deaf unit.

And she still finds time for a home life, for Elaine, who is married, believes strongly that marriage and career go hand in hand.

"It's thanks to a supportive husband and a stable home life that I've been able to achieve so much," she said.