

Spider in the Spotlight

An interview series with Richmond alumni sponsored by the University of Richmond Alumni Association.
Students are encouraged to learn about the career paths of fellow Spiders and connect with the Richmond network as they get started on their own path.



Anne Jolly Schlusser, '95

Founder/Partner
Clarity LLC

Recognizing that businesses need an extra helping of attention and support when it comes to finding the right temporary employees, Anne Jolly Schlusser co-founded Clarity, a New York-based staffing agency, with a focus on exceptional client service. Ten years later, the company has offices on both coasts and Anne says, "For me, it's the perfect job."

You graduated in 1995. Five years later you're in Manhattan running your own business. What happened in between?

My first job out of college was working on a political campaign in Richmond. I learned a ton, even though we lost, and I just went from there: campaign to campaign, and really, really enjoyed it. My last campaign was in North Carolina, and after that cycle, I was pretty tired, because it's seven days a week, 12 hour days. I had always wanted to live in New York. We used to take a lot of trips up there when I was a kid and I loved it, so I said why not? My now-husband (Daniel Schlusser, '96) who I met at UR is from New York, so we moved up there together before we got married.

What led to your current business occupation?

When I got to New York I looked at PR work. I looked at a lot of things that people who get out of campaign work look at, and none of it really struck me. Dan works in finance. He had gotten a job through a staffing agency and he said, "You should go talk to them, and they can help you." I went, and I actually ended up interviewing there, and it was a good match for me—to do their account management and sales. I was a fund raiser on the campaigns, which is basically a sales job and management, so it fit. I ended up at this agency that's still there for about a year and a half. I really liked the work. But I found that it was not the right company for me, and I think a lot of staffing agencies wouldn't be the right company for me. I need more camaraderie than most companies will give. That's why I like campaigns. Anyway, long story short, I met the woman who is now my business partner at that company, and we just decided to do our own thing.

When were you at Richmond what was your major?

I had about nine, but I ended up with political science.

What brought you to the University of Richmond, specifically?

I had a lot of friends and siblings who went to UR. My father graduated from the law school, so he was certainly pleased with my choice. But it was a good match for me academically, too. I can get straight A's, but I have to work very hard at it. I'm not a tester, so for me to go to a place with huge classrooms I knew wouldn't work for me.

How would you describe your occupation now?

I'm definitely a business owner. I'm in the day-to-day, but I own it and run the actual business, and don't service the clients anymore. People think you start a business and it's sexy and you're doing great things and you're flying all over. You're not. I did our books for four years. It's not always fun. But if you're doing it with people who have great senses of humor and who you really trust and respect, it is. For me it's the perfect job.

What sets your company apart?

My business partner and I feel very strongly about keeping good people and rewarding them and letting them get a bigger piece of the pie because of their hard work. That's unique in my business. We went through 9/11 in New York, in the Empire State Building, got through it. We just went through the worst recession obviously that this country has seen in 75 years. I saw a lot of good people in my business go out of business, and we didn't. It's because if a client had one job, they called me. I appreciate that. And I genuinely think it's because of our client service, the main bottom line.

Is that what you learned at Richmond?

[Laughs] I did learn a lot. I had a really good time, too. Richmond was very good for me because I felt like I got the attention that I needed as a student. I have two children. If they end up like me, I would definitely tell them that they should go to a school like Richmond. I learned a lot of discipline, but I got that not necessarily just through self driven desire. Teachers were always willing to talk to me. It was the right size for me. I'm a little bit of a nerd, so I'm that girl that never missed class.

How do you network?

Do you have any insights or secrets?

I do. It's a big part of my job. And it still is. Even in New York, you've got to be a person who's really willing to put themselves out there. You've just got to go out there and talk to people, because that's how you're going to get a job. Honestly—and you don't have to print any of this—temping is a great network. There are so many people that go on a one week assignment and they end up getting a permanent job at that company.

Any advice to offer about being in school or considering a career?

Keep your options open. That's something I've learned. Just because you graduate with a financial degree does not mean that you have to go be an analyst or you have to be an accountant. There's so much out there, if you're patient, and you look around and you focus on what makes you happy. I was a political science major and I took the LSATs and then before going to law school thought, "I don't even know if I want to be a lawyer. What am I doing?" That's a little scary. My sister's a lawyer. My father was a lawyer. I was like, "Being a lawyer makes sense." But, it doesn't always make sense.

Favorite song on your iPod?

The band is 'Band of Horses' and the song is *On My Way Back Home*—the whole album is great! And I'm totally dating myself there, but I still think of everything as an album....

Your favorite thing to do when you're not working?

I'm not a homebody, but I love to hang out at home with my kids. I love to cook.

Where is your favorite place in the world?

Probably New York—Manhattan—in the Fall. I really appreciate the wholeness, the diversity of New York.

Can you distill that to a moment?

Yeah. There is a restaurant on Second Avenue and 78th called Lusardi's. That is where my business partner and I would go to plan the company that we had yet to start. We actually would work for an hour, and then we would just sit and talk and pretend to work for two more hours. It was awesome. She and I lived about three blocks apart on the Upper East Side until she moved to open the California office two years ago. She's got three kids and I've got two. Just a lot of good memories of building the company and our friendship. Our husbands are friends. It was a good time.

What's your favorite memory of Richmond?

Probably meeting my husband, as corny as that is.

How did UR help you the most?

My experience at Richmond was definitely shaped towards the end by some difficult personal experiences. My father died of cancer when I was a senior. He got sick in my junior year, so I drove back and forth, and I really had to work with my teachers. I was at the time pretty much an A student, with some B's, and I didn't want to lose that. It probably wasn't that important, but at the time, you think it is, because you're trying to control something. As a result I really actually learned a great deal of respect for getting an education, and in fact, I almost didn't get to graduate from UR. I'm not trying to be dramatic, but because of hospital bills, we almost couldn't pay for my last semester of college. I learned a lot of respect for the teachers who took time away from their families to meet with me, because I would have to miss their class once a week. At the same time, I think I learned some professionalism, because I wasn't going to go cry to somebody. I didn't want to do that. But I did want to do well. They were really good to me, really good to me. My dad died a month before I graduated, so it was just a tough, tough time, but I love UR more for that. I think I just got to cherish my experience, and my friends and the education. It's a great education, and that meant a lot to me, and it certainly became more important during that time.

As a hiring professional, any tips for the graduates?

Think about what you want, but then don't feel entitled—which totally makes me mad in a lot of people. Be loyal, be honest, and work hard. There are a lot of people I meet who aren't willing to work hard.

Working hard—is that one way of showing Spider Pride?

I feel like UR really did prepare me in ways that I probably didn't even realize, or don't even fully understand yet, to work hard. There are some really bright people there, and I don't think you can get away with a lot when you're in a smaller classroom. For me, that worked. It was the right balance of fun and friends, and a great education. I genuinely am very, very proud that I went there. It's a great school.

— Mike Field reports from Baltimore

Where are you headed? Visit the Office of Alumni and Career Services online at richmond.edu/oacs to get started on your path.