

24 Hours As... Martin de la Bedoyere

Martin de la Bedoyere, managing director of Search Press, a leading art and craft publisher in the UK and winner of the Craft Business Awards 2018 Best Book Publisher of the Year, tells us about his day



What time do you wake up and what does your pre-work routine look like?

Getting up is generally one of the hardest things I do all day. I have never been an early bird and have always had to drag myself out of bed. The consequence is that I am generally hideously late for everything in the morning. A cup of coffee and a quick glance at my overnight emails from far-flung places in the world is basically all I can manage before jumping in the car and driving the 1.2 miles to work. I am usually last in – pathetic I know, with such an easy commute.

You get into work – what does a typical morning look like for you?

First off, every morning is to re-read and respond to emails that I glanced at earlier. This can last all morning. I find it extraordinary how much time we spend answering emails. What on earth did we all do before they were invented? We now live in a 24-hour world where people expect responses if not instantaneously then certainly within a few hours. Then it's time to look at sales figures, go to production or publishing meetings, troubleshoot problems or deal with staff issues. I have an excellent and experienced management team at Search Press, so things only get referred to me if needed, and that's the way I like it. I have always believed it pointless to employ someone and then

oversee every aspect of their job. I much prefer to see people grow and develop within a role. I believe you can only do this if you let your staff have freedom to do the job as they see fit. I am always on hand to guide, redirect and advise if needed. I am not a meetings person and we only have essential ones at Search Press. One of the most important is the production meeting, where we confirm the status of each title under development and finalise what books we will publish six months ahead. Our editors are brilliant, and they work as a team with our wonderful authors to produce the finest books we can. We exist in a multimedia world and we know that for a book to be successful it must offer something to the reader that other channels cannot. We strive tirelessly to achieve this. Our sales and feedback from the market suggest we get this right almost all of the time.

What time do you take lunch, and what do you do on your lunch break? What do you typically eat?

Around 1pm. We provide food for the staff at Search Press. One of the best part of the day is to sit in the kitchen with the other members of staff and chat about almost anything over a toasted sandwich. We have our own in-house photography studio so it's always a pleasure when authors join us for a kitchen lunch.

How does a typical afternoon take shape?

Most days I speak to the US office about sales and stock by Skype. Search Press is a global operation and our books sell all over the world. We follow international trends and often translate books from other countries to introduce new techniques to the English-speaking world. We make books that will appeal equally in Birmingham, UK, or Birmingham, Alabama. I am generally the last to leave and enjoy the quiet time after everyone has gone home. The evenings are my best time to delve deep into reprints and really think about the wider issues.

What time do you leave? And what kinds of things do you like to get up in the evening?

Normally between 7 and 8, usually fairly exhausted, ready for supper, a glass or two of my favourite red wine and the latest episode of the particular box set that holds my current fancy. Normally they're the ones with aliens and star ships – complete escapism.

Finally, what time do you typically go to bed on a work night?

Much later than I should

A BIT ABOUT YOU How did you come to work in your current position?

Eleven years at Reed Elsevier (an academic publisher), finishing as



Martin with Debbie Shore

Marketing Director meant I could apply for the MD's job at Search Press, rather than just being given it by my mother, the founder in 1970. I must have passed the interview. That was 20 years ago.

What advice would you have for someone looking to get into your particular industry?

Be prepared to do almost anything to get in at the ground floor. Get noticed, make an impact and work towards getting to do what you really want. Getting the job is only the start of the journey. You must work hard, excel in what you do and identify the things that are really going to make a difference.

What are the best parts of your job?

The most critical meeting we have is the publishing meeting. For me this is the fun part of my job. Dreaming up new ideas for content, format and packaging is very rewarding. It's a forum for new ideas which is stimulating and creative and the reason we all wanted so badly to work in publishing. Increasingly we brainstorm other ways to sell our content. Debbie Shore's Half Yard

Club, an internet subscription site, launching this summer is a great example of what can be born out of the creative process. We have only ever published art and craft books that support the craft industry. Books are so important for all the crafters out there. They teach, stimulate ideas, inspire and sell products for the retailer.

What are the most challenging parts of your job?

Staff issues are always a challenge. At Search Press we do everything from commissioning books all the way through to warehouse and delivery. So we employ highly trained editors and unskilled warehouse operators. Keeping such a diverse group happy in a relatively small team is stimulating.

What does 2018 hold for you?

Some brilliant books that editorial are nurturing now for publication next year. We have been at the forefront of the art and craft industry for many years. I see no reason why that should change, provided we carry on producing the best books and content money can buy.

