

# Q&A with Organico's Natalie Jackson: Highlighting women leaders in TR



Natalie Jackson, General Manager at Organico Travel Retail

In celebration of International Women's Day (March 8), *Global Travel Retail Magazine (GTRM)* connected with Natalie Jackson, General Manager at Organico Travel Retail (Organico) to learn more about her role at the company, leadership skills and work management. Carving out time in her schedule to not only share a glimpse of her day-to-day, but also offer insight into how she maintains a work-life balance, Natalie speaks to collaboration, connection and resilience.

Founded in 2018 and based in Dubai, Organico was formed with a mission to specifically serve the Middle East and Africa. It is part of the Netherlands based SEVA Group and self-described as a boutique brand building specialist.

**Global Travel Retail Magazine:** Tell me about your time at the company and responsibilities in the role of General Manager at Organico.

**Natalie Jackson, General Manager at Organico Travel Retail:** I've been at Organico for four years. As General Manager my day-to-day can be anything from meeting with our travel retail partners to supporting our incredible team of retail staff to working with our brand owners – the commonality in all of these activities is collaboration.

The best days for me are bringing brands to life in-store and helping people to achieve goals they previously thought impossible.

**GTRM:** How would you describe your leadership style and approach to decision-making?

**Jackson:** I would say I'm inclusive and empathetic. I try to meet everyone where they are without any preconceived judgements. I love finding out what makes people really tick and value teamwork and connection over results.

**GTRM:** What do you think is the most significant barrier to female leadership?

**Jackson:** "You can't be what you can't see" is the phrase I relate to most on this subject. Growing up there weren't many leaders that looked and sounded like me, which made it difficult to visualize success in a top position in the corporate world.

Although matters have definitely improved in this space, we all have a responsibility to show what is possible and to support others. Women leaders often shy away from celebrating their successes or standing in the limelight, but so often simply being visible can make a difference.

**GTRM:** What's the greatest risk you've taken as a professional and the best work-related advice you've ever received?

**Jackson:** I gave up a good corporate job at a superb company to set up a small business with my husband, Roger. We both thought we were entrepreneurial, but nothing quite prepares you for going solo without a safety net.

The best coaching I've ever received: "What's worse than an overflowing e-mail box? An empty one where nobody wants to speak to you."

Starting our own business was a massive lesson in perspective. When we are busy, I remember it is a privilege that we have worked hard to earn. It really helps to keep me in an opportunity and gratitude mindset.

**GTRM:** How do you manage self-doubt?

**Jackson:** Early in my career, I thought I needed to do more than anyone else to be successful. I worked crazy hours and became defined by this. When I didn't work 70 hours/week, I always felt I would be "found out."

Then, I worked for an amazing boss, Guy Dodwell. During this time, I was diagnosed with encephalitis, a life-threatening brain condition. I was fully out of action for the first time in my career. I experienced memory loss and had to work incredibly hard to rehabilitate. My boss not only stood by me, but he actually supported me in earning a promotion during this period - my mind was blown!

At my most vulnerable, someone saw all that I was, and wasn't, and still stood for me. I realized I had nothing to hide and that I was enough. This was extremely liberating and a great lesson in leadership and acceptance.

I will remember that period for the rest of my life; it fuels me to show vulnerability and to stand for other people. Having strong relationships and trust in the people around you is the only way to overcome self-doubt - so surround yourself with people who cheer you on and want you to succeed.

**GTRM:** How can women support other women in the company and across the travel retail industry?

**Jackson:** By recognizing the different strengths individuals offer and allowing people the space to flourish - we are all different and there is room for us all. Ultimately, we have to believe in abundance; a rising tide lifts all boats.

**GTRM:** How do you maintain work-life balance? What is your biggest self-indulgence at home?

**Jackson:** I have a 6-year-old daughter and I made a career change when I realized I was too exhausted on the weekends to be the kind of parent I wanted to be.

After years of believing that being a parent wouldn't change me, I realized that in fact it had changed my outlook completely. Being a great parent will always be the most meaningful role that I can play. I am unapologetic about that now.

Being mindful of personal success - for me this is living a happy life, where I can be a great parent, partner and friend, but also give myself space to grow - is how I keep myself in check when I find myself slipping into old working habits. This is a conscious and daily effort, but my support network here in Dubai keeps me on the right track.

My biggest self-indulgences are going to the gym and on "staycations" with my family. We are lucky to be surrounded by amazing hotels and spas in the UAE - there is nothing better than a night away or a spa day with the girls.