











# THE WORLD OF TOP BANANA.

# LIFE AT THE PLANTATION.

### Who we are and what we do...

Top Banana is an award winning communication events agency specialising in Leadership Driven Events. We work both nationally and internationally with a wide range of clients including Bacardi, Bentley, Whitbread, Avon, Barclaycard and many more.

Our mission is to help leaders and businesses communicate better. We do this through creating live events and communications to help get their staff on board with the business strategy. We're experts at helping national and international brands get their message across during times of growth, change and challenge. We pride ourselves on delivering events that engage the delegates and make a long-term difference.

## TOP BANANA.

# **OUR BANANA ROOTS & PLANTATION...**

Top Banana HQ is based in a small village called Broome in the West Midlands (approx. 20 minutes from Birmingham). We also have a Central London office to help us service our London and Southern-based clients.





Top Banana was founded in 1999 by Nick Terry and Richard Bridge (starting off in the grand surroundings of Nick's garage!). In 2017 Nick decided to move on to pastures new leaving Richard taking full ownership supported by the newly created BLT (Banana Leadership Team, not sandwich!) Below Richard explains a bit about how Top Banana came about, where he sees the business heading and most importantly... where the name came from!

### Tell us about life prior to Top Banana...

I didn't do particularly well academically and after leaving school decided to do an Audio-Visual course at the local college. This led to me working in video production for the next 7 years doing filming and editing both of which I really enjoyed. Nick and I met working together on a job in Spain, we decided to combine our skills and so Top Banana started!

### What made you decide to start your own company?

I guess I was frustrated doing what I was doing and felt like I'd reached a ceiling where I was. The option of partnering with Nick was a really exciting opportunity. It was a big risk at the time having just got married, had a baby and bought a new house that needed completely renovating! I haven't looked back though!

### Where does the name Top Banana come from?

On the job Nick and I worked together on in Spain, the crew all had bananas skins printed on the crew shirts (my old company logo featured a banana skin!). A brilliant freelancer called PK used to say "Top Banana" when things went well or say a video got a clap, it all started from there. The more we thought about it, the more it seemed right. On our first show reel we used the Banana Splits theme tune!

What 3 words would you use to sum up Top B? Creative, Ambitious, Fresh



### What was your vision for Top Banana when you started out? How is this different now?

We always had this goal of setting up a company that made a difference, one that felt like no other company we had worked at. We wanted it to be fun to come to work; we'd only employ people who were likeable and fun. We also saw ourselves being based in a barn conversion somewhere. 15 years ago the name Top Banana was a bit "out there", we experienced a lot of pressure to change it to something different, but we felt we needed to not be safe and stand out. We'd smashed our financial goals for the first 5 years in just 3 years. Now I am amazed by how much energy, support and inspiration comes from the team. I never really expected that feeling of invincibility that comes from a true "can do" team. The difference now I guess is that the vibe comes as much from the team as from me. Our name is recognised as delivering something that makes a measurable difference

#### What's been your proudest Top B moment?

The proudest for me has to be a Gala Dinner we organised at the Forbidden City in Beijing. The aim was to epitomise "old" China as part of a two day conference. Special permission from the Chinese government was secured for the dinner to take place with over 60 stamps of approval needed! Delegates arrived by Police escort to the Ancestral Temple inside the Forbidden City and were greeted by Chinese Dragon Dancers. Twenty Imperial Ladies guided guests through to the huge square at the base of the temple where the Beijing Philharmonic Orchestra were playing. Dinner was served by 140 waiters in a military formation serving each person simultaneously. Traditional Chinese dancing rounded off the evening. There was a lot of planning, red tape and logistics involved but it was all worth it — a definite highlight for me!

#### Where do you see Top B going over the next few years?

We'll keep learning and we'll keep challenging. We definitely want to continue growing and doing what we do so well. We'll be working with even more companies, as well as our existing clients at a deeper level, delivering exciting solutions that work even better. We are open to the possibility of expanding our office base, potentially with additional offices either in the UK or overseas.



# **OUR VALUES.**

At Top Banana we strive to model best practice, as we work with some of the best brands in the world we need to practice what we preach! We have refined and tweaked our Vision and Values a few times over the years, but are confident what we now have truly encapsulates the Top B essence and what is important to us.

We've kept it simple and have 4 core values, decided by the Top B staff, that we now live and breathe. We hope new team members will embrace these too. Values make sense when brought alive by key behaviours, again the team have decided what these key behaviours are.

### PASSIONATE.

### Enthusiastic Heart & soul Go the extra mile

We truly believe in what we do
- delivering great events. That passion
is evident across the company.

### RESPONSIBLE.

# Ownership Accountable Doing the right things right

We take 100% responsibility for everything we do and everything we say we'll do!

### **AUTHENTIC.**

Genuine Honest Integrity

We encourage open and honest communication both with our clients and internally. We're not afraid to say if we think there is a better way to do something.

### CREATIVE.

Imaginative
Thinking why not?
Outside the box

We constantly like to push boundaries and come up with new and innovative ideas. Everyone in the company is creative in their own way and we often encourage people from all departments to get involved in brainstorming new ideas & projects.

# **SHARING THE LOVE...**

At Top B we genuinely believe our staff are the key to everything we do and achieve. Our aim is to create a nurturing environment, encourage growth & development and help people reach their full potential.

We have also worked really hard to create a fun, open and honest place to work with lots of communication opportunities. After all, if this is what we do day in day out for our clients, we should be able to do it internally as well!

## **FANCY A CHAT?**

Our communication opportunities are plentiful including daily huddles, monthly staff meetings, twice yearly staff conferences, regular appraisals and our ongoing Banana Buddies team.

The Banana Buddies include a representative from each department and are there for staff to feedback to confidentially about any issues or concerns they may have. These get then fed into our Heads of Department Meeting, where they are discussed and resolutions suggested.









## STOP SITTIN' AND START SWEATIN'.

The Health & Wellbeing of our staff is really important to us and we have a policy to back this up, along with lots of initiatives to help our staff stay healthy and have a good work-life balance.

We are keen to offer Flexible Working as much as we can with several staff currently using this. We also encourage working from home where possible.

Wellbeing Wednesdays are a long standing initiative which sees the first Wednesday of each quarter giving a focus on a different aspect of Wellbeing – be it healthy eating, exercise, education sessions. Above are a few of things we've got up to so far!

Other healthy things we offer include:

- Private Healthcare as part of our benefits package (including access to a 24 hour GP helpline and 24 hour stress counselling helpline)
- Free Flu Jabs
- Free Eye Tests
- Participation in Work-Life Balance Week
   & National Go Home on Time Day



# **GREAT COMMUNICATION.**

As we've grown as a company we believe our Line Managers roles have become even more important. We've put together our own Line Management framework called GREAT Communication, which focuses on the different skills and behaviours we believe our Line Managers should have and display.

This framework links into all aspects of Line Management development and training – appraisals, coaching sessions and training plans. All staff are aware of this framework so their managers have the little subtle nudge knowing we have defined to their team what and how they should be managing.

# **LET US READ YOUR MIND!**

Well, kind of! To help us understand each other better and improve how we work together we use the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) self-assessment tool on an ongoing basis. This helps you determine where you get your self-worth from and also what's important to you when relating to other people.

We have a member of staff internally who has been trained in delivering the SDI tool and we hold regular sessions, both with new employees for them to understand their profile, along with refresher sessions for existing staff. If you fancy checking out what the SDI is (we assure you it's not a dodgy disease!) you can find more info here http://www.personalstrengthsuk.com/what-is-sdi-strength-deployment-inventory



## THE SKY'S THE LIMIT.

We have several people at Top B who have grown and developed with us. Some of the case studies further on give a flavour of some "old timers" journeys here.

We genuinely believe the sky is the limit when you join.

Training & development are actively encouraged and supported along with taking responsibility for what you do, suggesting new ways of doing things and stepping outside of your comfort zone. Each person has their own individual training plan which is regularly reviewed and updated. If there's something you'd like additional training in, just ask!

Whether you have ambitions of being our next MD or are perfectly content doing what you're doing, we will support you all the way.

# WHAT CAN I EXPECT ON MY FIRST DAY?

Each person has their own bespoke induction plan which involves visiting each department within the company and completing a "checklist" of all the information you need to know. Your first week will be scheduled to ensure you meet the team, get to learn all about life at Top B and start to get to grips with how and why we do things. You will also be allocated your own Banana Buddy who will take you under their wing and make sure you join us for lunch and the daily walk around the village!

# SO WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

We understand that holiday and benefits are important considerations when deciding to take on a new job. We've put together our benefits package based on feedback from staff, which includes:

- 25 days holiday (increasing to 26 after 4 years service)
- Pension
- Private Healthcare we will provide Private Healthcare for yourself, you also have the option to add on family members if you wish (at the discounted company rate)
- Death in Service Cover
- Childcare Vouchers

# WE'RE NOT LYING... HONESTLY!

To show we're not just bigging ourselves up, we also have a few external accreditations to help keep us on the right track.

In March 2017 we were accredited with Investors in People Gold status, an award we are incredibly proud of.

We also have the ISO 9001 Quality Standard, the Safecontractor Health & Safety award and are currently working towards ISO 20121 – a Sustainable Events accreditation.

# WHAT'S THE STORY?

Here's just a few of the highlights in our story so far...









1999

Company was founded & did first overseas job

2001

Move to first offices at Wassell Grove, Stourbridge & employed our first 4 members of staff, 2 of which are still with us! 2005

Took over Optical Image and moved to current office premises in Broome, Stourbridge 2012

Won Institute of Internal Comms (IOIC) Central -Agency of the Year award

2013

Won Company of the Year at the Birmingham Post Awards 2014

London office opened, celebrated 15 years in business with a trip to Barcelona 2017

Richard Bridge takes full ownership of Top banana NEXT?

Watch this space...!!

## MEET THE BLT...

The BLT was started in 2017 to create a broader leadership team within Top Banana. Their role is to help lead and shape the strategic direction of the business. They are also supported by the Ops Team who help manage the day to day running of the business.



Louise Goalen, Head of Venues

What does the BLT mean to you? Being part of the Leadership Team means stepping up and leading by example – it is a great honour to be on the BLT and

to work with inspirational leaders. We are the steering group that drives Top Banana!

What does your role involve? As Head of Venues I lead the Venue Sourcing team in looking after Top Banana's enquiries from a venue perspective. We challenge the norm and ensure we cover all options. Sourcing the right venue for an event gives the team a real buzz. We have an great reputation with all our suppliers and they go above and beyond to fulfil our clients expectations.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining Top B? Top Banana are very highly thought of in our industry and to become a Top Banana is a very sought after credential.

Sum up life at Top B in 3 words Awesomely brilliant and rewarding

### How is Top B different to other places you've worked?

Everyone at Top B truly believes in our Values, Mission and Culture – they are not just written words! We work hard but have fun whilst we are doing it and deliver the most amazing events to our clients.

**How would your fellow BLT members describe you?** Venue savvy and good fun



Jemma Peers, Client Services Director

What does the BLT mean to you? Creating a solid yet inspiring and ambitious business for our people and our clients

What does your role involve? As Client

Services Director I lead a team to execute projects for clients as well as delivering for my own clients. Challenging ideas and creating new and exciting concepts.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining Top B? If you want to be in a creative, exciting, fast paced and forward thinking, highly respected agency then this is the place for you.

Sum up life at Top B in 3 words (can I have 4) Never a dull day

How is Top B different to other places you've worked? We are a challenger brand in our industry. We never settle for anything other than the best and have a great time doing it.

**How would your fellow BLT members describe you?** Truly Passionate about our industry and our people, always looking for new and creative ideas to push the boundaries.





Jade Ball, Head of Production & Client Services Director

You've been a Banana for a while, tell us about your journey so far... I started at Top Banana in 2008 as a Senior Account

Executive. Top Banana was my first job in an agency and getting used to the fast paced way of working was interesting. Top Banana really supported me from the word go and I could see quite quickly that they were keen to support in my personal development and help equip me with the tools and training needed to move up and be the best I could be.

In 2010 I was promoted to an Account Manager where I was now responsible for looking after my clients, to be their day to day contact, I had targets and empowerment to make my own decisions with clients best interests at the heart of all we do. In 2010 I also became a line manager as I needed a Production Executive to help with the workload and was sent on training courses to help me to understand how to line manage.

2012 I was promoted again to become a Senior Account Manager. I was now much more involved in the high level client meetings where we talked about objectives and strategy at Board level and was heavily involved in creating event and video content, ensuring at all times that message was the focus of our creativity. I also took another team member on board at Account Manager level to help with workload and be the client day to day contact.

In 2014 I was delighted to be promoted to Account Director. This role saw me Overseeing two Account Managers and two Production Executives and getting under the skin of our clients to understand their objectives and looking at the bigger picture in all we do to ensure message is the focus and at the heart of our creativity and ideas! Part of this role was also ensuring that my team received all the training, knowledge and support they needed to deliver the best for all our clients.

In 2016 I received my best promotion to date and became a Client Services Director and Head of Production. Whilst still servicing my own clients with the support of my team, I am now responsible for overseeing the whole Production department ensuring that everyone delivers a true Top Banana event with consistency for all of our clients. I manage resource and training and am a go to for all challenges and advice. Stepping up into this role enabled me to see more of a bigger business picture which then opened up a position as a BLT member in 2017. Here I help shape the future strategic direction of Top Banana which is a real privilege and responsibility that I thoroughly enjoy.

What does your job entail? Getting under the skin of our clients to understand their objectives and looking at the bigger picture in all we do to ensure message is the focus and at the heart of our creativity and ideas! Support my department to be the best they can be and to ensure everything we do is done the Top Banana way. Challenge and support teams in event delivery and ways of working and offer training and new solutions to enable us to deliver Above & Beyond! Look after client relationships, internal relationships and be a Banana!

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? Do it, you'll never look back!

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Empowering, Team, Fast Paced

How is Top B different to other places you've worked? The biggest difference is the empowerment they give to us to make decisions on behalf of the business and our clients. The culture is also the best I've ever experienced, it's really like having an extended family that all truly support each other and work together.

How would your fellow BLT members describe you? Passionate. Positive. Completer finisher.



Jane Bradley, Finance Director

What does the BLT mean to you? Teamwork, accountability, responsibility, strategic thinking.

**What does your role involve?** Finance – monthly management accounts & costings, IT, Contracts and general compliance to the ISO9001:2015.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining Top B? Be prepared to work hard and give 100%. It's a real team effort, so if you can work hard and efficiently you will be a real asset to us.

**Sum up life at Top B in 3 words** Demanding, mind stimulating, worthwhile

How is Top B different to other places you've worked? It's more of a team, a real family environment. We care about each other and have each other's backs. The work is more quirky, changeable & challenging.

How would your fellow BLT members describe you? Thoughtful at times, crazy at others!

## **MEET THE BANANAS...**

We currently have around 45 members of staff – all of whom are incredibly passionate and committed to what we do.

We have several departments in-house including Graphics, Video Production, Venue Finding along with our Account Management department. We put a few of them on the spot to see what they had to say about working at Top Banana. Here are their answers (we haven't bribed anyone...honestly!):

### Mark Barton, Account Director

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 3 years

What does your job entail? In short account direction, project management and client liaison

What does a "typical" day look like? There is no typical day. Every day is different, which is what makes it the job it is!

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? Our values are our backbone so if they strike a chord you're likely to feel at home.

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Engaging, collaborative, progressive

### Martha McGarry, Senior Graphic Designer

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 4 years

**What does your job entail?** Designing and artworking various event items for print.

What does a "typical" day look like? It starts with our morning huddle which is where we discuss what we will do with our day and find out if any of our plans have changed. Then the account manager who is responsible for the client we will be working on will usually come and brief us. My day will revolve around creating and amending artwork for the client. This is anything from pitch work, creative brainstorms, branding or artworking.

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? I would encourage them to do it and highlight the perks of working for a company where you're well cared for.

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Friendly, challenging at times, fun

### Jill McKinnon, Client Services Director

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 9 years

## You've been with Top B a while – what's your journey been during your time with us?

My Top Banana journey started back in January 2008 where I joined the business as an Account Manager. Strange to look back now as I was one of only two account managers (the other being the owner of the company).. and now 7 years on we have 7 account teams! My role has grown as the business has grown, initially taking on new members of staff within the production department to help deliver my events, to then moving up to Account Director managing multiple account managers and clients. With the Account Director role I took on other management duties, sitting on the management team and assisting with strategic planning with the board. Over the last few years the business management side of my role has grown and in 2013 I was promoted to Client Services Director. As Client Services Director I look after the whole of production within our Broome Office and am responsible for hitting company revenue and margin targets. My experience and journey within the company has been a vital part of me being able to perform within my current role - knowing the business, culture and clients inside out helps me to make strong and informed business decisions. Top Banana continues to

strive and has bold growth ambitions and I am looking forward to continuing my career journey in this exciting and dynamic business.

What does your job entail? A mix of client management and Top B management

What does a "typical" day look like? Catching up with my team and other internal departments, overseeing client projects which may involve meetings or phone calls. Working on management and communication projects

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? It's unlike any other agency you may have worked for, we are friendly fun and hugely team orientated. We are like one big happy family – we work hard but we have fun doing it

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Productive, busy, supportive



### Dave Pinches, Art Director

**How long have you worked at Top Banana?** 14 years in total – over 2 stints!

**Tell us about your Top B journey** First round lasted 10 years... learnt lots and made a family but wanted to see the outside world. This is my second round and I'm four years in... brought back many stories from a far and also learns from my adventures.

What does your job entail? Looking after the creative well-being of the fold. Exploring ideas, looking for little beautiful nuggets to share. Helping to steer the ship through the storms, hanging out on deck when we hit sunny weather...

What does a "typical" day look like? I struggle to do typical which is good because a typical day doesn't exist here.

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? Jump aboard... bring some biscuits or avocados

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Journey, Adventure, Family

### Ian Bellamy, Video Producer

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 3 years

What does your job entail? Co-ordinating video shoots and edits for Top B internal jobs as well as my own portfolio of clients producing TV Commercials, corporate films, web promos & virals.

What does a "typical" day look like? No such thing as a typical day! Could be quoting jobs, sorting all production admin, assisting others if needed, managing all bookings for the studio

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? It's a top team of creative and passionate people who work hard and play hard.....if you have drive and personality come join us!

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Rewarding, Challenging & Fun



### Jamie Teale, Studio Manager

**How long have you worked at Top Banana?** I am just starting my 12th year with the company

## You've been with Top B a while – what's your journey been during your time with us?

I've had quite a few roles in my 10 years at Top Banana and my development has been encouraged throughout. I started as a Video & Event Assistant back when we were still fairly small and I had to cater for 3 Account Managers and was also essentially a runner too for the video department. I then began working solely for one Account Manager and then progressed to working for many years directly for the Creative Director. I have always known that Account Management wasn't for me and over the years, I have carved out my own role focussing more on the technical and logistical aspects of events and because I picked up the art of technical 2D plans through AutoCAD, one of my recent job titles was the self-titled "Event Astronaut" because I was dealing with "Event Space". In April 2014 an opportunity came for the role of Studio Manager and I jumped in with my size nines and I'm not looking back!

What does your job entail? As Studio Manager I am the gatekeeper to the creative department. I ensure that the Account Management teams get the right creative resource on the job and that the creative gets the tools, time and motivation to do their job.

What does a "typical" day look like? A typical day starts of well with good intentions but then more balls come your way for you to juggle... Thankfully there is a good team around you to catch some of those balls!

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? Depends on the role, but be prepared to work hard but amazingly have fun getting through the busy times together! You are joining a great team.

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Varied, caring, camaraderie

### Hannah Brueton, Marketing Exec

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 12 yrs

You've been with Top B a while – what's your journey been during your time with us? Any time is a great time to start at top b, but I started at a particularly exciting chapter in the company's story as they were growing fast and moving to the current HQ. My first role was on Reception at the new offices at Broome. The role was brilliant as I got to put my stamp on it but I also loved the energy of working with such a creative and diverse team - who were going places! Keen to develop employee's skills top b gave me the training and support to develop this role into an admin and accounts role, a great move which I enjoyed but I was also hungry to develop my creative skills and get some events knowledge. The development of my skills within the business led me to the opportunity of becoming the then Creative Director's PA. Again I had huge amounts of fun within this diverse role and this led to me supporting our MD with the marketing communication of the brand. After taking some time out with my gorgeous daughter I'm now working in a part-time role in accounts where I can use my process skills! I still enjoy helping out with our CSR work which gives me chance to unleash some creativity as well! The limit to your career progression and journey at top b will begin and end with you. The support and training in place at top b mean the sky really is the limit!

**What does your job entail?** Currently I work part-time assisting the Finance Team

What does a "typical" day look like? You can leave the word 'typical' at the door with top b that's the beauty of the job diversity. We have a strict schedule to follow each month in order to produce the Accounts but aside from that the job can also be very reactive, such is the events industry. Starting the day with an open mind and empty page is the best strategy!

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? Go for it you're in for a great ride!

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Busy, unique, team

### Rachel Farrington, Production Executive

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 3 years

What does your job entail? Assisting my team in their day to day tasks, booking crew flights for events, helping with the logistical aspects of our events. Helping to pull together proposals and budgets and also general admin tasks to help everything run smoothly behind the scenes of our events.

What does a "typical" day look like? I wouldn't say I have a typical day, as every day is different but mainly as above and assisting with adhoc tasks that come our way.

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? It's an amazing place to work, where everyone gets on really well and everyone is always willing to help!

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Fun, determined, unique

### Ian Cooke, Senior Account Manager

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 3 years

What does your job entail? Account manager looking after a number of clients and delivering a variety of events

What does a "typical" day look like? There isn't really a typical day at Top Banana, there is so much variety in my role. Even when you think you know what the day has in store a client may come to you with a request that needs addressing. I recently was asked to plan and deliver an event for 1000 people in a factory...within a week!

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? If you're the type of person that loves a challenge, works hard and is willing to get involved then Top B is the place for you.

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Fun, Fast, Challenging

### Ian Brown, Venue Sourcing Specialist

How long have you worked at Top Banana? 3 years

What does your job entail? Supporting the production team on sourcing venues for their clients events and also direct venue finding enquiries too.

What does a "typical" day look like? A typical day could include sourcing a multiple venues for a group of 500 delegates for an international event to sourcing a board room for 10 people for a half day meeting. And everything in between!

What would you say to someone thinking of joining Top B? If you enjoy a work hard play harder environment and want to challenge yourself jump in feet first! I did and, after a baptism of fire, I am loving it! Just think, you could be the next Banana!

What 3 words would you use to describe working at Top B? Challenging, Fun, Exciting







There's lots more info about what we do on our website, so you can check us out on there

### top-b.com

Why not keep in touch via Social Media as all current vacancies will be advertised on there as well as our website







