

ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE F@*& YOU ROPE

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JANEEN SALTMAN, OWNER AND FOUNDER OF JKS EVENTS, STANDS IN THE BACK THE MOMENT BEFORE THE GUESTS ARRIVE. THE SCENE IS SET. CANDLES ARE LIT AND THE MUSIC IS PLAYING. SHE'S BEEN ENVISIONING THIS EVENT FOR MONTHS. THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM, SHE TAKES A BREATH AND IS READY FOR ANYTHING.



Janeen Saltman is a born and bred New Yorker. Her attitude, her style, and her ability to convey and deliver exactly what she wants are proof positive. Born in Brooklyn and raised out on Long Island, she's always been an East Coast woman. After attending NYU and earning a major in broadcast journalism, she never left the City. But the idea to be an event planner only came to her 3 or 4 years out of college. After school, she went directly into television to pursue her broadcast journalism career. She worked in production for *Politically Incorrect* for HBO Downtown Production as well as working for the *Apollo Comedy Hour* for Apollo Productions. It seems she has always been connected in New York productions at the hottest and most popular locations in the city.

Getting ready for events, going as an executive, always included dancing around her apartment to Madonna and Prince, the original albums, of course. It was during these mornings and attending these events when she realized that "Wow, I think I can do this and do it better than the events I'm attending." With her family as role models, she seemed to be destined to run her own business. She says fate really didn't give her an option in starting her own business, stating that "working for other people, doesn't work as well for me as being my own boss." Establishing and running a high-class event planning business in New York City is definitely a place where Janeen needs to have

an alpha personality, which she fills fantastically, in high heels no less. Her business started out of her studio apartment at the end of March 1999. She was lucky though, she says, because she had already established relationships in advertising as an account executive. If great event planners know how to do anything, it is establishing and keeping relationships. Her business, founded mostly for real estate parties and the emerging and now, seemingly ancient dot-coms, began to ignite. Then they asked us to do bar mitzvahs and weddings, and birthday parties." Her ability to entrance the hosts and run an event smoothly and with originality made her event planning business explode into other venues.

In 2001, Janeen's life changed professionally and personally. She and her husband-to-be planned their first event together, their wedding. On March 10, friends and family gathered around in masks, the bridesmaids in white wings, the groom armed with a "Phantom of the Opera" mask and a cape (to put on during the reception) and the bride dressed as Queen Esther, a Jewish heroine. The theme: a masquerade ball, and nothing could be more perfect. With a lot of help from her friends in the business, she took the night off so she could walk down the aisle. The wedding proved to be her crowning glory. It was featured in *The New York Times* style section, which catapulted her career. She also gained a business partner, her husband Alden Levy. Now, with

two children her life is all about balance and inspiration. Making time for family dinners, date nights with her husband, doting on her 18 month old and her 3 and-a-half-year-old, business meetings with her husband, time with friends, a hectic work schedule, and a few spare moments for herself, Janeen is always on the run. She describes her life as "not for everyone." She is indefatigably working and creating ideas for new and fabulous events which continue to grow along with her business, "I feel like am constantly working."

She is inspired daily, mostly from just walking around the city. Constantly on the lookout for fabrics, colors, textures and emerging themes of the season, she finds New York to be constantly changing what the next big thing is. And Janeen pays close attention. She uses whatever inspires her and incorporates it into a fresh and cutting edge event. She explains, matter-of-factly, it is "really just education, keeping yourself educated on what the next trend is... reading and constantly looking, because I really feel I can learn on a daily basis."

She thrives under pressure and loves to think on her feet. This is the most difficult part of her job so, naturally, it is her favorite. She laughs her way through a story about one of the brides who ends up getting smacked in the face by the front of her dress, leaving a big lipstick stain on a luxurious, one of a kind, designed-for-her wedding dress. Of course, the bride began a rapidly increasing

hysteria. So Janeen, accustomed to last minute catastrophes, simply looked her in the eyes and said, "You are going down the aisle, we are not cleaning the dress. You are going to take your bouquet and you are going to hold it specifically over the lipstick stain and it's going to be the best story to tell your guests in the cocktail hour." And that is exactly what happened.

Although much has changed since the conception of JKS Events in the bowels of her studio apartment, Janeen has stayed much the same. With an amazing creative imagination and an ever growing mind, she is still the woman who listens to Madonna and Prince to get her feet moving, although now it seems she listens to the "Hokey Pokey" and "Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" every morning. Her independent and determined mind set remains steadfast. With the economic crisis looming over her head, she simply says, "We are going to ride it out... people still need to have weddings and bar mitzvahs and corporations still need to show and market their products. So events are really a business that's here to stay."

As far as the future, their tenth anniversary is on the horizon and Janeen's thoughts are focused laser-like on the future "It's really about staying the course and I truly believe that if you keep your business focused then slow and steady wins the race. It's been ten years, and I'm ready. Ready to win."