

The Guardian

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am an investigative journalist on The Guardian newspaper- a liberal daily newspaper printed in London and Manchester - based in the political lobby at the House of Commons. A large part of my job involves investigating Government ministers and MPs - on issues involving financial sleaze, such as being paid by lobbyists or having conflicts of interest in the business world.

I first met Kimia Zabihyan - then in charge of Observer Films (a subsidiary of the Guardian Media Group) - after our newspaper had exposed the " cash for questions " scandal which led to the resignation of two Government ministers.

I worked with her on developing a film based really on a hunch - that the opening up of the gas market in Britain would lead to MPs behaving badly with lobbyists. Her enthusiasm and belief in the talents of people around her led to Channel Four commissioning the film - even though there was no guaranteed outcome.

The result was an investigation that exposed how one well known Conservative MP - former British Olympic athletics champion, Sebastian Coe - had been duped by another MP to attempt to change the gas legislation to benefit his private business interests.

The outcome was not only a brilliant TV expose but a front page story for our newspaper which contributed to the fall of the Conservative government in 1997 - by showing the sleazy background to some of the party's MPs. The MP involved in the duping operation stood down at the last General Election.

It was my first serious transition between print journalism and TV and her enthusiasm, quick grasp of complex issues and ability to translate print ideas on to TV, was invaluable for " a new boy."

I have no hesitation in recommending Kimia for any film -making job. In fact, firms would lose out by not taking her on to their team.

DAVID HENCOCK - THE GUARDIAN



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