

# women into the network

effective business support for women

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# Welcome to the second edition of **IF (Inspired Females) ONLY...**

**IF ONLY** is a publication featuring the stories of enterprising female role models from around the United Kingdom, which will inspire women everywhere to achieve their goals and fulfil their dreams.

That's a pretty strong claim, but a magazine called Northern Lights, developed in the North East by Women Into the Network (WIN), showed that role models play a crucial part in motivating and encouraging others to take risks and grow both personally and professionally.

AWE (Accelerating Women's Enterprise), a partnership of leading women's enterprise agencies across England was able to build on this pioneering work and created **IF ONLY** as a national version.

All the women featured in **IF ONLY** have done remarkable things, yet we can all relate to them. They come from a variety of backgrounds and their businesses are located across many sectors, from beauty therapists to builders. The one thing they have in common is that they have tackled a whole host of challenges in order to establish themselves in business.

We all gain from having role models in our lives. They can be well-known entrepreneurs or celebrities – but more often are our mothers, neighbours, friends or colleagues. They can guide us, encourage us and help us to grow. And when starting a new business, or developing an existing one, learning from others' experiences and how challenges were faced along the way, can have a huge impact. Whether it be developing confidence, taking risks, coping with setbacks or overcoming fears –

hearing from someone who has done it, perhaps struggled, and become a success, encourages budding entrepreneurs to make it happen for themselves.

We hope **IF ONLY** inspires you and you enjoy reading the stories of all the women featured in this second edition.

If you would like to be featured in future editions of **IF ONLY** or you would like to tell us about someone who has inspired you, please do get in touch with the team at Women Into the Network (WIN).

Best wishes,



*Dinah Bennett*

**Dinah Bennett**

Women Into the Network  
[www.networkingwomen.co.uk](http://www.networkingwomen.co.uk)  
Durham Business School, Durham University

**Please see inside back cover for more details of the AWE partnership.**

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Editor: Andrea Wren  
Designed & produced by Sheridan Design, Newcastle

## Siobhan Bales & Diane Gates > The bgroup



### The bgroup

*Communications agency specialising in youth markets and entrepreneurial start-ups.*

Established in 2001 • Based in Newcastle upon Tyne • Employs 11 staff • Tel: 0191 2611333

Email: di@thebgroup.co.uk, si@thebgroup.co.uk • Website: www.thebgroup.co.uk

Siobhan Bales and Diane Gates have the type of 'can do, will do' attitude that keeps them open to opportunities and able to focus on goals. Siobhan feels her parents are responsible for her outlook on life, and says she grew up with "The surety of not being afraid of anything or anyone, resulting in a successful school life and the establishment of a recognisable entrepreneurial attitude to everything."

Diane also had an upbringing that laid foundations. "Dad was in the merchant navy so there was lots of travelling and experiences of different cultures. I'd seen snakes that swim and fish that fly by the age of eight, so knew anything was possible."

For these two women, meeting up was the best thing that happened to them in terms of their business. Siobhan impulsively set up The bgroup alone after the birth of her second child, deciding that going back to work was not for her, and Diane was one of two people recruited within three months of rapid business growth.

"I realised that running my own thing was where my future was at," says Siobhan. "I bought £2,500 worth of IT equipment, set up a temporary office in my son's nursery and started trading a few weeks after. Diane was one of the graduates I employed and a few

months later she invested money into the business to become a director."

Diane spotted the enterprise potential within the innovative approach of The bgroup and was keen to become an integral part early on. She loves the work they do. "We essentially help organisations to communicate with young audiences and businesses, connecting ideas and campaigns, as well as managing these via the provision of creative brands and campaign tools," she says.

*"We believe you can achieve a positive outcome in any situation"*

Their success has been phenomenal. The business is already becoming the UK's preferred communications agency within their sector and is set to expand further. "We believe you can achieve a positive outcome in any situation," says Diane. She feels that problems between her and Siobhan have been few and far between, because essentially, very little holds them back. And with that attitude, they can only go forward.

## Michelle Bennett > The Express Kitchen

Michelle Bennett is a true success story of a woman who has really turned her life around. With seven children, she had never worked, and though she desired a large family, her self-esteem was low, feeling she hadn't had an opportunity to achieve in other ways.

"I hadn't worked for eleven years," says Michelle. "I was nervous about even getting a job as I thought I wouldn't be able to do it."

When she had the opportunity to help out at The Express Kitchen in Southport, little did Michelle know that she would go on to own the business. But once employed, her confidence soared until she was running the

bakery almost single-handedly "I knew I could manage a business because I was doing a lot of it myself," she says.

In 2003, Michelle bought The Express Kitchen when her boss moved on. She got support from Train2000, a women's business support organisation based in Merseyside, and took out a bank loan of £10,000. She says "I knew all the customers and they were encouraging me, saying that I could do it, as were my family and friends."

It was tough to begin with, Michelle had a major cashflow problem and for the first two winters struggled enormously, but since setting up she has now doubled the business income. "If I knew then what I do now, I'd have become much more financially aware at the beginning," Michelle says.

The Express Kitchen supplies to trade customers throughout Merseyside and Lancashire, many of them smaller businesses such as newsagents, post offices and garages. The business supplies sandwiches, salad boxes and other lunchtime food six days a week on a sale or return basis. Michelle's plans for expansion include opening a shop soon which will supply food to the general public.

Michelle is very proud of her success, as she recognises the self-courage it's taken to get to where she's at. "I'm made up with myself!" she says. "I know I'm going to do it. You have to be very determined to succeed; nothing stops me when it comes to my business – or my kids."



*"You have to be very determined to succeed; nothing stops me when it comes to my business..."*

### The Express Kitchen

*Supplying trade customers with bakery products and sandwiches*

Established in 2003 • Based in Birkdale, near Southport

Employs 5 staff • Tel: 07980 627596

Email: expresskitchen@btconnect.com

## Wendy Bowers > Hilton Bowers Associates Ltd

As finance director for ten years in her family firm and with 20 years experience of growing businesses, Wendy Bowers was no stranger to the difficulties that companies can encounter in the course of their lives. When the firm suffered financial crisis almost forcing them into liquidation, Wendy used her expertise to switch things around. By the time she left to set up Hilton Bowers Associates Ltd (after separating from her first husband) the business was in excellent health.

Turning around companies from the brink of extinction is just the sort of challenge that Wendy seeks, "I love this work," she says. "It's very stressful and you have to move fast, but that suits my personality." She manages this even though she has a family of four children, with her youngest only seven years old.

This isn't the main part of Wendy's business; the bulk of her work involves providing consultancy and training on all aspects of financial management for other companies. Now, with clients such as Barclays Bank and Rosebud Funding, her business has grown enough to warrant employing two full-time and two part-time staff to help her deal with the large client base she has built up.

It's easy to see why Wendy is successful. She has a keen eye when it comes to spotting potential openings and can maximise on using her expertise. She's confident about where she's at and where she's going, knowing that clear direction is a must for any thriving venture. "I would like to grow my business to have a team of five specialising in turnaround solutions," she says.

Initially, Wendy sought financial help from her local Business Enterprise Agency and received a cash grant of £1,100 which she matched with a bank loan. She feels getting support is essential. "Never be afraid to ask for advice from peers and friends. Trust in yourself and your own judgement, if you have a bad feeling about someone, don't work with them. Join a network for support and socialising, there will be a lot of people there just like you. Above all enjoy yourself – it's great being your own boss!"

### Hilton Bowers Associates Ltd

*Providing advice, consultancy and training in all aspects of the financial management of developing businesses*

Established in 1998

Employs 2 full-time and 2 part-time staff

Based in Colne, Lancashire

Tel: 01282 862163

Email: wendy@h-b-a.net

*"Trust in yourself  
and your own  
judgement"*

## Janet Caddick and Alison Burnett > All Nations Childcare

*"Life can always be a struggle but if you're doing something that makes you happy then the struggle is worthwhile"*

For Alison Burnett, a qualified nursery nurse and mother of one, it was acknowledging the lack of adequate childcare provision in her area that was the motivation she needed to launch into business. But for Janet Caddick, who had worked within a childcare capacity on a voluntary basis, having her own children was the inspiration she needed.

"My children have given me the strength and determination to succeed," says Janet. "But it wasn't until they were in school that I realised I could achieve my goals, dreams and aspirations."

When the two women worked together on a childcare project, there was a meeting of minds when they recognised the potential business venture before them would fill a gap in the market - and be a blessing to local parents. "I realised how much of a demand there would be for our idea through having a child of my own and from searching for childcare, since there was not much provision in the area," says Alison.

All Nations was launched to provide everyday childcare, an after school club and a Saturday club specially targeted at three to eleven year olds, in two boroughs of Liverpool with few facilities in terms of childcare. The name is derived because the centre is for everybody, from all backgrounds and cultures.

Setting up the enterprise was the biggest challenge for Janet, because initially confidence was an issue for her. Once sure of the direction she was headed, her confidence soared. For Alison, the obstacles



### All Nations Childcare

*Providing everyday childcare for children from all backgrounds and cultures*

Established in 2005 • Based in Liverpool

Tel: 07811 071736 • Email: janetcaddick@aol.com

were more the practical aspects of legalities and finding the right premises.

Both women are thrilled with their achievements, but received excellent support from Merseyside-based organisation Train2000, who, as Janet says, "not only spoke our language but met our needs and gave us the help that we needed to take our ideas to the next level."

"Life can always be a struggle but if you're doing something that makes you happy then the struggle is worthwhile," says Janet, to those thinking about changing direction. Alison strongly believes that "If you follow your dreams anything is possible; as long as you put your heart and mind into it."

Turning your hopes into reality is every woman's wish and Ann Chui is one of the lucky ones. When Ann spent her childhood dreaming of becoming a designer, little did she realise that was exactly what she'd grow up to do.

Ann is from Hong Kong and was educated at boarding school in England. She spent her days making dresses for paper dolls and envisaged herself in the fashion industry when she became an adult. College days were a wonderful and stimulating time for Ann. She says, "Art was taught in a free and wild manner and inspired me greatly!"

Continuing her education in art and design she went on to do a degree in fashion and textile design, then after graduation, ventured back to Hong Kong to work in design, buying, and visual merchandising.

Now, her business is designing handbags for exclusive outlets and boutiques with a few tough decisions to make along the way. "I was approached to do freelance work in trend forecasting and designing for a handbag importer who was greatly impressed by my work. She suggested that we set up a label together but the partnership was showing cracks in the early days, so I decided to do it alone."

Clearly, Ann's good business judgement has been crucial. She has sold her bags to high street chain Hobbs, and has made exclusive designs for Red Direct. Her next move is to approach department stores and she would like to design for stores on a contract basis.

Any new enterprise encounters obstacles, and Ann is no stranger to the problems caused by some of the suppliers she depends on. Dedication is a necessary virtue at such times. Once, when a merchant provided inferior leather, Ann says, "I spent many hours standing over the workers and quality checking the finished products myself."

*"The most satisfying aspect has to be the freedom, the fact that I am only answerable to myself"*

However, with support from London women's business organisation Street Cred she's been able to ride out the waves, rough or smooth. What does Ann enjoy the most about being her own boss? "The most satisfying aspect has to be the freedom, the fact that I make all the decisions and am only answerable to myself."



**Ann-Ann**

*Makes and sells exclusively designed handbags*

Established in 2004 • Based in London

Tel: 0208 9812447 • Email: ann@ann-ann.co.uk

Website: www.ann-ann.co.uk



*"I looked around and saw successful business people were those who took risks"*

**Ashbourne Canine Hydrotherapy Centre**

*Easing a number of health conditions in dogs through providing hydrotherapy treatments*

Established in 2004

Based in Ashbourne, Derbyshire

Tel: 01335 344476

Email: info@ashbournecaninehydrotherapy.co.uk

Website: www.ashbournecaninehydrotherapy.co.uk

While many women are seeking self-employment as a way of fitting family commitments around their work, Sue Etches wanted a career that could fit around her dogs! Her children, at 18 and 15, are able to fend for themselves, but Sue doesn't think it's fair to keep animals home alone all day.

Her working life is not how she envisaged it, having worked for ten years in the kitchen of the local school in a job that was supposed to last for a week, Sue is adamant that the next ten years will be different.

What better business for her than one which involves her canine friends? "The two children are grown up and I felt the time was right," she says. "I looked around and saw successful business people were those who took risks. I knew I had to do this myself or I would never get anywhere."

Sue had seen an advert about hydrotherapy and decided, after a conversation with her dad about his ailing dog, to go on a taster course. This was all the convincing she needed to imagine herself running her own hydrotherapy centre and she began her research, but convincing others was the obstacle she faced.

"It was difficult to find any support for my idea at first," says Sue. "But a friend told me about Business Link and I got a 50% grant from them. Resolving the building issues was also a challenge, but the more problems that came up, the more determined I was to overcome them."

In order to get some help, Sue asked her eldest daughter Sam to be involved as an equal partner in Ashbourne Canine Hydrotherapy Centre. It's worked well, they've been operating for six months and haven't had a cross word.

Though both women still work part-time and are not yet drawing a wage from the business, the fact that Sue is in charge makes all the difference to her satisfaction. "Making lots of money doing something you don't enjoy is not the way to go. I have combined my love of dogs into a business and it's fantastic!" She only wishes she'd done it sooner.

## Jane Gallagher > JLG Media

"I knew I always wanted to be a writer," says Jane Gallagher. "As a child I would be designing magazines and books and I read avidly."

Writing has been the fire in Jane's soul since she can remember. She found herself sending letters to Kate Adie and other news reporters who fascinated her as she grew up, before going on to get a job with her local newspaper after completing her English degree.

Jane then took a position with the Liverpool Echo, spending 12 years here as a journalist, but also writing stories for national women's magazines while she had time off on maternity leave to have each of her four children.



But returning to work after her fourth child Jane was unhappy to find the structure had changed and was also fighting post-natal depression. She began thinking about going freelance, and started to build contacts and networking opportunities, but two final pushes were to come.

"In 2002 I ran the New York Marathon which was a great personal achievement. I felt I could accomplish what I set my mind to. In 2003 my depression became full-blown after my dad was diagnosed with cancer

### JLG Media

*Freelance media consultant and journalist*

Established in 2003 • Based in Formby, Lancashire

Tel: 07817 908374

Email: janelgallagher@blueyonder.co.uk

and I was off work. I knew if I returned I would face the same situation again so I took the lessons I had learned from the marathon and the confidence it had given me to become a freelance writer and media consultant."

Now, Jane writes for local, regional and national magazines and also has consultancy clients such as Smokefree Liverpool, Women's Business Network and several NHS Trusts.

She loves the freelancing life, as not only does it give her the satisfaction of being self-employed and being valued, she also says "My family is the most important aspect of my life which is why I have built my whole business around the needs and demands of my growing children."

Though she recommends that other aspiring freelancers should do their market research before taking the plunge, her fear of not having enough work has been unrealised. In fact, Jane says, "The hardest part is not having enough hours in the day to fit it all in!"

*"In 2002 I ran the New York Marathon which was a great personal achievement. I felt I could accomplish what I set my mind to"*

## Karen Glancey > Anroach Clinic



*"I did my homework and really examined my target market"*

### Anroach Clinic

*Offering Chinese Acupuncture and health retreats in beautiful surroundings*

Established in 2004 • Based in Buxton, Derbyshire

Employs one full-time staff member and 6 contracted therapists

Tel: 01298 25004 • Email: karen glancey@aol.com

Website: [www.anroach-clinic.co.uk](http://www.anroach-clinic.co.uk)

From teaching young offenders in prisons to practising Chinese Acupuncture in a ruraly positioned clinic, Karen Glancey couldn't be further from her original career. But work-related ill-health meant that Karen knew she had to change her focus.

"I needed to get balance back into my life and do something that was rewarding and felt healthy for me," she says. "When I practically suffered a nervous breakdown, I turned to Chinese Acupuncture which helped me immensely."

This positive experience influenced Karen's decision to study the medicine. However, it took sheer determination, much expense and the convincing of others to get things off the ground, but Karen knew she was doing the right thing. "I received lots of advice from different quarters telling me that this either was or wasn't a good idea, but I did my homework and really examined my target market."

Only 12 months into the practice Karen has recently seen a 300% increase in the number of patients who have attended since last year. "I have just had to tell a new patient that I cannot see them for three weeks as I am fully booked on the three

days that I practice."

Deservedly, business is booming. The investment into Karen's training alone has cost £25,000, leaving her one of the most highly qualified practitioners in the country.

Karen came against opposition to her ideas. The rural location of the clinic was considered unwise by some but this didn't deter her. "Chinese Acupuncture is about balance, so tranquil surroundings seemed the most obvious place to practice in. One business advisor who visited me practically patted me on the head and advised I rent a room in town!" However, the Peak Park New Environmental Economy recognised the potential and gave her a £20,000 building conversion grant.

Karen is also a member of Women in Rural Enterprise who have helped her considerably and she only wishes she'd set up in business years ago! Her suggestion to other women embarking on a similar journey is, "Go for the very best of everything that you can afford. The way you present yourself is very important."



*“By nature I am passionate about everything I do...”*

**Starters and Spice**

*Offering a variety of starters and snacks to organised lunch and dinner events and special occasions*

Established in 2004 • Based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Tel: 07771 564330

Email: maunika@startersandspice.co.uk

Website: www.startersandspice.co.uk

Maunika Gowardhan's love for Indian food stems from her childhood in Mumbai, India. Though she came to England in 2000 to complete her MBA at Cardiff University, and went on to work in senior positions at British Gas before relocating to Newcastle in 2002, Maunika was always keen to have her own company.

After nine years building her experience in the corporate field, Maunika eventually took the plunge. She began her own business Starters and Spice last year. An astute businesswoman, Maunika says "I have seen a gap in the market where we need to introduce the consumer to a larger variety in terms of Indian cuisine, and break the barrier that Indian food is mainly associated with curries."

Starters and Spice offers light finger buffet food to a varied clientele for many occasions. These have included art gallery events, weddings, corporate lunches and dinner parties. Obviously the nature of the work means that the hours are long, as people want food at all times of the day! Maunika is not deterred by this. "By nature I am passionate about everything I do. With there being no regular hours, it does help me to stretch out my time and be as flexible as possible."

Maunika feels strongly that her commercial background has provided the right foundations for setting up alone, helping her to make decisions about the direction she is heading. She also received assistance from other organisations and says, "I had gained knowledge for business from studying an MBA and also through experience of working in management over the years. I have received support from Business Link, Project North East, and my PR company."

Maunika is clearly one of life's go-getters but she thinks all women are capable of achieving success. She gives sound advice for those who have their own dreams to follow. "Believe in what you're doing, the business, and the decisions you make, including the time spent on each assignment you take up. This sounds like a cliché but it's true, and will play an important part in moving your business forward. The results will show in the work you produce."

For most women who set up their own business when their children are born it's because they need to balance their family commitments – Kate Grubb's motivation was her involvement with the Real Nappy Network and her raised awareness of ecological matters!

"My love of nature and the earth is fundamental to all my interests and aims in life," says Kate. "Without respect and responsibility for our natural world there is no point to anything."

Kate was working as a veterinary nurse before the birth of her daughter but started a part-time job cleaning holiday cottages once she became a mum. This work, combined with her interest in environmental responsibility, was the impetus behind her business idea – to build

an ecologically sound holiday accommodation to let to others who shared Kate's passion for respecting the world.

Luckily for Kate, the response from various business support agencies to her proposal was phenomenal. "I received a 50% grant of £30,000 from Defra Rural Enterprise Scheme as well as loans and support from organisations such as WiRE (Women in Rural Enterprise), Triodos Bank, the Prince's Trust, local businesses and environmental charities."

Ecocabin is built from ecological constructions and uses renewable energy sources to provide heat and lighting. Kate offers a 'local shopping' service to obtain groceries for her customers before they arrive and stocks Fairtrade basics in the larder. A recent article in the travel section of The Times covering Kate's highly unique holiday concept has been a real boost to business.

Kate's achievements are clear, though she's overcome a few obstacles along the way. "Initially I faced problems with people not taking my ideas seriously and 'red tape' with planning and building control, but if there is something I am not happy about then I look for a way to change it."

One thing that Kate feels strongly about is that a lack of knowledge or experience should not be a barrier to other would-be entrepreneurs. "You just need to listen to and utilise others who have the understanding that you require. The most important thing that you have to offer is you. Celebrate being unique and bring that to your business."



*“Celebrate being unique and bring that to your business”*

**Ecocabin**

*Providing environmentally responsible self-catering holidays*

Established in 2005 • Based in Bucknell, Shropshire

Tel: 01547 530185 • Email: kate@ecocabin.co.uk

Website: www.ecocabin.co.uk

Sheila Haswell's enthusiasm for her career in health and safety was wearing thin, but after moving to Derbyshire, she lost her sense of direction. It was a burning desire to make a business out of a hobby that pushed her to try out a unique entrepreneurial venture.

"I had written lists of business ideas for years and never done anything with them," says Sheila. "I had always worked in a salaried post and needed the money. Miserable and aimless, a friend suggested soap making and I took it up. I wanted to prove I could do something different and felt it was the input I needed."

*"Take on another very demanding thing at the same time so you feel almost overwhelmed and it will make you work harder"*

The idea for Fizzpotzz emerged from her friend's gentle persuasion. An original concept, Sheila runs girly birthday parties and special occasions making soaps and cosmetics with up to 12 participants. And if customers prefer to manage their own event, party buckets containing different goodies can be sent out instead. "It's all very pink and gorgeous!" says Sheila.

**Fizzpotzz**  
*Original soap and treat making parties for birthdays and special occasions*

Established in 2002

Employs 4 staff

Based in Ashbourne, Derbyshire

Tel: 01335 350195

Email: [info@fizzpotzz.co.uk](mailto:info@fizzpotzz.co.uk)

Website [www.fizzpotzz.co.uk](http://www.fizzpotzz.co.uk)

With four children of her own, the fact that most of her customers are eight to twelve year old girls doesn't bother Sheila in the slightest – though she does find it hard to locate party leaders willing to work with this age range,



amongst other minor problems that she's had to deal with since going it alone.

"I can't get people to do birthday parties for me; they are all scared of ten year olds! But the hardest thing is never having an empty mind. When you are cooking tea and talking to the children you are always thinking about something else."

Sheila's positive and fun attitude is an obvious necessity for the type of business she's in, but she offers her suggestions for anyone else who is contemplating a major change such as this "Tell everyone you are doing it and then it will happen. Take on another very demanding thing at the same time so you feel almost overwhelmed and it will make you work harder."

And Sheila is not a woman to let domesticity stand in the way. Her best advice of all?

"Ignore dust, forget how to use an iron and stop cooking!"

*"It was the realisation that anything was possible that inspired me to start Mother Earth"*



Jane Holroyd's personal faith in natural therapy and holistic healing was pivotal in her decision to develop her own range of natural skincare products, against a tide of cynicism that was rising at the time. Her success, she believes, lies in the fact that she never did doubt what she was doing, and why.

She certainly knows her stuff. Trained in reflexology, aromatherapy, massage, herbalism, natural and spiritual healing, kinesiology and Indian head massage, Jane has definitely followed her calling, and why resist the siren's song? Though it can be easy to let pessimists deter you from your objectives, Jane resisted;

"My role models have been Kitty Campion and John Andrews from the School of Herbs and Healing because they refused to accept limitations for the power and scope of natural healing or in their contribution towards promoting it's acceptance into everyday life. They passed on this positive belief to me and it was the realisation that anything was possible that inspired me to start Mother Earth."

Now living a life many would envy in the Lake District, Jane turned her hobby into a business and employs eight staff to keep the wheels turning. "After a year of local craft shows and listening to feedback on my products, I realised there was a market for investing more time and money into them. People liked them and repeatedly told me that they worked and how good they were."

It's very hard work, she admits, but worth it. "The most rewarding thing is that I get satisfaction in knowing that I have done it on my own and it's all down to me. That is what drives me."

**Mother Earth**  
*Produces and sells a range of natural skincare and healing products*

Established in 2002 • Based in Cumbria

Tel: 01229 885266

Email: [enquiries@motherearth.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@motherearth.co.uk)

Website: [www.motherearth.co.uk](http://www.motherearth.co.uk)

The future is bright for Mother Earth. Jane plans to open up a shop in Grasmere and then would like to introduce a visitor centre, which will be a centre of excellence for organic trading, hoping to later include an organic café.

Jane's advice for success is quite simple, apart from suggesting to get as much help as you can, she says "Do something you believe in." Which makes sense really, because if you don't believe in your business, how will anyone else?

Kellie McLoughlin and Nichola Lawton met at university while studying for their degrees in biomedical science. Little did they know at the time that they would later end up running their very own – and extremely original – business venture. But being self-employed was something Kellie always wanted, whereas having a 9-to-5 job was something Nichola knew she didn't want.

At the time of their graduation, paternity issues were a media hot topic and they hit upon a novel concept – to open a walk-in DNA testing clinic, offering services to all people, regardless of gender or background. "We wanted to take a humanistic approach to relationship and paternity testing," says Kellie. "We knew with this idea we had found a niche in the market."

Sequence Biotechnologies Ltd was opened in March 2005. The service offers more than just performing the test then handing over the result, which Kellie thinks is needed. "We offer our clients a support network, including free counselling. Paternity testers at the moment just give you a letter with your result and a list of counselling organisations to contact."

Months of meticulous researching to develop their business plan paid off. "We had to be prepared to answer any question as we knew we would need to take out a sizeable bank loan," says Kellie. "The rest of the finance came from a number of organisations such as Liverpool John Moores University, Bolton Business Ventures, Train2000 and Liverpool City Focus. We were awarded these funds and grants on the basis of our business plan and financial predictions."

Because of the environment they work in, for Nichola, the biggest challenge has been building confidence. She says "We work in a very male-dominated industry and most people are at least 10 to 15 years older than us. I would advise others to really research the market they are entering as I feel this carried a lot of weight with us."

*"We knew with this idea we had found a niche in the market"*

Kellie and Nichola are still developing many aspects of the company and have lots of hard work ahead of them, but they feel it's the best thing they could have done, neither of them would have it any other way.



**Sequence Biotechnologies Ltd**  
*Providing DNA testing in the UK's first ever walk-in clinic*

Established in 2005 • Based in Liverpool  
Tel: 0151 7954188 • Email: [info@sequencebio.co.uk](mailto:info@sequencebio.co.uk)  
Website: [www.sequencebio.co.uk](http://www.sequencebio.co.uk)

While Nikki Onwuka's mother wanted her daughter to have a career in medicine, Nikki herself couldn't shake off her childhood dreams. "I always loved making clothes and dressing up dolls," she says. "And even though my degree was in psychology, whatever I did, I always came back to sewing."

Though born in England, Nikki went back to the family home in Nigeria for many years from being a child, eventually setting up her own clothes shop where she "sold everything!" Returning to the UK in 1997 she initially found a job, but her passion for making clothes was her driving force. She knew this was what she wanted to do.



However, the British business arena was a perplexing place for Nikki and she couldn't work out where to start. "The system is very, very different and I didn't know how to go about it," she says. She sought advice from London women's business support organisation Street Cred, who helped her formulate her ideas and access training.

Nikki wanted to make beautiful ethnic bridal dresses, shoes and accessories, but offer the whole package from the engagement dress through to the wedding day. The name, Cupid's Shoe, came from a

*"Seize opportunities while you can as they hardly ever come back"*

footwear accessory she'd created, which later became the subject of a fairy story.

A very original concept, Nikki has written the tale of Cupid's Shoe in book form and the characters will be wearing her designs. With her venture, she has stayed as true as she can to her preferred theme of fantasies, fairytales and magical kingdoms!

She has also found a good niche. "There are few ethnic bridal designers so I don't have a lot of competition. I'm very confident in my work and am thinking about ways to market myself effectively. I may even do charity fashion shows to exhibit my designs." Her current customers are private ones who require individual commissions.

Nikki says to those who are starting their own businesses, "Seize opportunities while you can as they hardly ever come back." The fact that she has been able to do this as well as learn a completely different business culture shows just how inspirational Nikki is.

**Cupid's Shoe**  
*Providing the whole package in hand-made ethnic bridal wear and accessories*

Established in 2005

Based in London

Tel: 07984 997577

Email: [enne4u@yahoo.com](mailto:enne4u@yahoo.com)

Pat Parry's Liverpool childhood was a happy one and she puts her confidence and self-belief down to her protective older brother. "I felt very secure and safe," says Pat. "Simply I could fly!" That her family home was the central "meeting place" and hub of activity for all their friends is reflected in the attitude to business that she has developed.

For Pat, one of the most vital things about running a company is to network, network, network. Her beginnings in media and marketing would have taught her the importance of having contacts, but Pat feels that opportunity comes from the people you meet, and she thrives on seeing others develop.

In fact, Pat's made this her business. "I decided to launch my own training and development company specialising in marketing, sales and training the trainer, after being Chairperson at Sefton Chamber of Commerce."

Four years on, Pat has become a limited company, has reputable clients and a forward-thinking attitude. "I continually work to seek out new approaches to training through training events and putting a focus on different market segments," she says.

But working alone was a challenge for Pat as she was lacking in colleagues to share triumphs with, so she found a solution and launched Sefton Women's Business Network. Pat says, "We now have over 200 members. We offer monthly networking meetings, training opportunities, guest speakers, social events and other activities."

Pat enjoys the fact that many opportunities have emerged through the network, and she hopes to expand it even further, along with the new ideas she has for training. She also offers one-day workshops to groups setting up their own networks.

*"...search out like-minded business people who will share their experiences and contacts with you"*

Pat feels that her dreams wouldn't have been realised without doing her homework at the outset and she thinks this is a crucial factor for anyone setting up in business.

"When the idea is just an idea, search out like-minded business people, who will share their experiences and contacts with you. Ask a million questions." She also says, "I do have a Pat Parry saying, 'failure is not an option', but there is usually a plan B just in case!"



**PP.B.A. Ltd**  
*Creating and delivering training programmes and workshops for individuals and businesses throughout the North West*

Established in 2001

Based in Sefton, Liverpool

Tel: 07860 646103

Email: patp@premiumuk.com

After an endless series of "dull, boring and uninteresting jobs" Lynn Pattison had decided she'd had her fill of them once moving to the Lake District with her husband and two daughters. But when her marriage broke down and she had to turn to any job that paid the bills - the mind numbing work she had grown to hate - she knew enough was enough.

"Since moving to the Lakes in 1979 I had started to go fell-walking and discovered that I loved the outdoor life," says Lynn. "I had attended a Rural Women's Network (RWN) confidence building course and approached the local paper to see if they would be interested in me writing for them. I started writing 'Walking for Softies' which now appears on the Outdoor Page of the local paper every other week."

*"...the hardest part? I haven't found out yet!"*

The walks are targeted towards people who enjoy getting out and about, but don't want to face a gruelling mountainous slog

while doing so. It was a natural progression for Lynn to put books together following her columns, and she now has a third in the pipeline.

She then expanded her business and became a walking guide. "I had toyed with the idea previously but the cost of insurance and fees for the leadership course I needed put me off," says Lynn. "Then I saw an article in the RWN newsletter detailing funding for such projects and applied. I have never looked back."



Lynn feels lucky to have found something that now fulfils her needs. And the proof of her success can be shown by the number of business referrals she has. "I get clients passed on to me by local hotels whose guests want to explore the area. Several of my clients have also come to me via my website."

In Lynn's view, positive thinking is the order of the day. "I have been fortunate in so much as I have had very few, if any, problems setting up my business. The most satisfying aspect is that I love being my own boss, working for me rather than going out to work for someone else. But the hardest part? I haven't found out yet!"

**Walking for Softies**

*Leading walks in the Lake District 'without the pain' and producing guide books for people to follow their own path*

Established in 2003

Based in Gosforth, Cumbria

Tel: 019467 25413

Email: info@walksforsofties.co.uk

Website: www.walksforsofties.co.uk

When Jackie Peddie was in her late 30's and needed work that would fit around her family, she was shocked to be told that she was 'too old' for a job as a supermarket cashier. Her previous employment had little flexibility, and this rejection was the last straw. Jackie knew resourcefulness was needed to get an income.

"I asked my husband if there was any work I could do for him and began by researching new business lists," says Jackie. "I found this easy, so started approaching other companies offering to do the same for them."

Soon, Jackie was not only finding sales leads, but was also sending out mailshots for the businesses she was working with. The venture expanded, and after working at home for a year, she moved premises to share office space with a funeral director! She has moved on a number of occasions since then.

*"Don't put all your eggs in one basket"*

"Increased orders meant that the business grew very steadily and though I started in the kitchen, we're now in a building occupying 100,000 square feet on two levels," says Jackie. "But I'd suggest staying at home as long as possible and keeping overheads low. Working from home is much more acceptable now than it was then."

In 1987 Jackie's husband joined forces and now as a partnership they employ over 80 full-time staff and have their grown-up children on board in what's become the family business. Jackie won Women Into the Network's North East Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2004, and hopes the company will develop into a "second generation operation."

"It didn't come overnight," says Jackie. "The business has been 20 years of hard slog and grown entirely out of the profits. Getting the

children involved has helped enormously, not only for the company, but also in terms of doing things as a family and spending time with them."



Jackie advises fellow enterprisers: "Don't put all your eggs in one basket - have a number of strands to the business that you can expand on should one area weaken. Having said that, you have to stay focused on an idea, don't keep chopping and changing, stick with it."

**The Mailing House Group Ltd**

*Providing direct marketing services from large-scale direct mail requirements to call handling solutions for clients using the call centre services*

Established 1984

Employs 80 full-time staff plus agency workers

Based in Northumberland

Tel: 08700 102000

Email: jackie@themailinghouse.co.uk

Website: www.themailinghouse.co.uk



*"...if customers like you then you're in there"*

**Little Miss Perfect Ltd**

*Contractual cleaning services for offices and other environments*

Established in 2004 • Based in London

Tel: 0208 2813487

Email: admin@lmp ltd.com

Website: www.lmp ltd.com

If you find yourself describing your new business-related problems as "positive ones that I could learn from," then you know you've got the attitude it takes to get your venture up and running, which sums up the outlook and approach of Pamela Pereira.

Pamela came to England from Singapore when she was ten and worked as soon as she left school to help her parents out with her siblings. She went on to have a family of her own and studied an Open University course in psychology, working part-time to support it.

However, having already toyed with the idea of turning the part-time cleaning she was doing into her own business, Pamela decided to go ahead with it whether she passed her psychology exam or not.

"The business itself was like an adventure," says Pamela. "I thought if I can make something from cleaning, why go for an extravagant job?"

She sought support from enterprises that help people start their own companies, including Street Cred, which specifically helps women, and Change, based in London. Now, Pamela has a couple of large cleaning contracts under her belt and is expecting to secure others very shortly.

Pamela is wise enough to take guidance from the people who know her business best - her clients! She talks to them about how to seek more work and says "I've learnt a lot from my customers, they've kind of advised me on how to apply for contracts and negotiate. I take their advice."

As her company is still in its fledgling stages Pamela hasn't started paying herself wages yet, instead choosing to plough her earnings back into the enterprise. She needs some new equipment and hopes to be employing another person - her son - after she gains the next contract.

One of the most important features of working for herself is that she gets to do it on her own terms "The most satisfying aspect for me are the results when people are happy with my work," says Pamela. "You know it is sink or swim with any business so if customers like you then you're in there, that's a real buzz."

With so many wishes to fulfil and countless aspirations to attain, one business alone cannot satisfy Aneela Rose's needs. Instead, she has realised her dreams by setting up and managing two very different ones!

Her first company, Aneela Rose PR, came about after nine years in the field as an employee. After a university education in marketing Aneela had found the career she was looking for, and went on to spend many enjoyable years in this profession, improving her position continuously. "I moved up the career ladder with each new job, from starting off as marketing administrator, then finally to head of marketing and PR for one of the UK's top IT resellers."

*"I realised there was a gap in the market and immediately set upon a path to fill this void"*

Beginning her own successful PR enterprise was a natural progression for Aneela. "Being told by others that I was good enough to work for myself and that I should take the plunge gave me confidence to consider giving it a go. I haven't looked back since."

Her company offers services to a wide range of clients in many industry sectors. This keeps up the variety and challenge for Aneela, who clearly thrives on new ventures and exciting tasks. So much so, of course, she then decided she would set up a boutique to complete her dream, as well as it being an astute commercial decision.

"When I turned 30 I couldn't find anything to wear that combined exotic eastern designs with western elegance. I realised there was a gap in the market and immediately set upon a path to fill this void." And so AneelaRose boutique was born.

With a steep learning curve ahead for Aneela in terms of the financial decisions she now had to make, it paid off, as the shop was shortlisted in the HSBC and Sky News Start-Up Stars Awards in 2003 as one of the UK's top 20 new start-up companies, and also has claim to some famous customers.

Aneela's visions of the future are of expansion to both businesses, which are a credit to her obvious dynamic nature, though she has appreciated the help along the way, in the form of Sussex Business Enterprise, and her accountant husband!



**Aneela Rose PR and The AneelaRose Boutique**

*PR, marketing, design and events consultancy, and boutique selling embroidered clothing and hand-made jewellery with an east-west twist*

Established in 2002/2003

Both businesses employ 2 staff

Based in East & West Sussex

Tel: 01444 241341/ 01273 747742

Email: [info@aneelarose.co.uk](mailto:info@aneelarose.co.uk)

Website: [www.aneelarosepr.co.uk/](http://www.aneelarosepr.co.uk/)  
[www.aneelarose.co.uk](http://www.aneelarose.co.uk)



*"A friend once told me not to panic because 'life is a marathon, not a sprint'"*

**21st Century Business Solutions**  
*Providing other businesses with their clerical needs*

Established in 2002 • Employs 3 staff

Based in Swansea, Wales • Tel: 0845 3452968

Email: [Sharon@21stcenturybizsolutions.co.uk](mailto:Sharon@21stcenturybizsolutions.co.uk)

Website: [www.21stcenturybizsolutions.co.uk](http://www.21stcenturybizsolutions.co.uk)

Sharon Rouse's route into business may be more unusual than most, but she's living proof that from whatever your starting position you can still make your dreams a reality. "I found myself serving a prison sentence for a crime I did not commit, and in order to keep my sanity, I worked on a business plan which I was determined I would carry through on release."

Sharon was in prison for five months, and had gone from being someone with a good job and comfortable lifestyle to someone who felt she had lost everything, including her self-esteem. But she knew from where she was at, the only way was up, and was determined to succeed.

Receiving support from family, friends, the college where she'd gained her degree, and funding from the Welsh Development Agency, Sharon set up 21st Century Business Solutions as a 'one-stop' shop to meet the clerical needs of other companies, from administration, office support, financial, secretarial and front-line services.

"The first year was really hard going as I had to prove to myself as well as a million and one others that I could do it. Now fortunately three years on I have finally turned the corner and feel that I can consider myself 'on the up'."

Sharon is more than happy with what she's achieved so far, and has had a variety of clients, ranging from The University of Wales Swansea to many small businesses around the area. While expansion and growth are important to her business, Sharon also says "I want to be in a position where I can help others who have found themselves in a similar situation to me."

One of Sharon's strengths, it seems, lies in a recognition that sometimes foundations need to be in place before you can develop further. "I am prepared to walk before I can run," she says. "A friend once told me not to panic because 'life is a marathon, not a sprint'."

And she has some gutsy advice for others treading the path. "Take the bit between your teeth and go for it – don't leave it until you are forced into a corner – do it for yourself!"

## Hazel Southam > The Real Jam and Chutney Company



**The Real Jam and Chutney Company**  
*Making and selling seasonally created preserves to original recipes with local produce*

Established in 2004

Based in Winchester

Tel: 07785 538556

Email: [info@realjam.co.uk](mailto:info@realjam.co.uk)

Website: [www.realjam.co.uk](http://www.realjam.co.uk)

Nothing can beat the stories you hear about grandmothers and mothers passing on old family recipes down the ancestral line. When you've been deliciously consuming them as a child, even a successful career in journalism may not be enough to keep you from wanting to find out if you could do equally well in getting those recipes out for the public to try, as Hazel Southam discovered.

"My mother and grandmother made the tastiest jams that I've ever had. Even though I use the same recipes, I don't think mine are quite as good!" says Hazel. These two women clearly had a major influence on her. "They were both kind, caring, seemingly ordinary women who were in fact extraordinary and remarkable."

But the business came about almost by accident, according to Hazel. "It was a chance discussion over dinner with friends. The conversation turned to local food and I bemoaned the fact that you couldn't find preserves that tasted like the ones that I'd grown up with. 'Have you got the recipes?' asked one friend. 'Yes,' I replied. 'Then why don't you make them and sell them?' she said.

"That was the start. I knew that people were increasingly demanding locally-produced, locally-sourced food that tasted fantastic. That was what I wanted to make. We were bringing something to market that people would want."

Initially, Hazel was working full-time in journalism but has since reduced her hours just enough to have a steady bill-paying income. She eventually wants to run her venture permanently and has taken on three women to help produce the growing amount that is required.

Her business partner, Philip Comer, has been an invaluable support, but Hazel also appreciates how family and friends have helped. "People's whole-hearted positive reaction made me think that this was a good idea and has kept me going," she says.

Hazel has obviously developed a great sense of business acumen since taking the plunge into her enterprise and offers some wise words. "Get grants before you start, otherwise you'll worry about money everyday" she says. "Be certain about what you want to do and don't get deflected from it, but don't over-commit yourself."

*"People's whole-hearted positive reaction made me think that this was a good idea and has kept me going"*

## Christine Woodall > Pets Behaving Badly & College of Pet Animal Studies

When Birmingham-born Christine Woodall says she has devoted her life to specialising in the behaviour of animals, she really means it. At the tender age of ten in the 1960s Christine became involved in dog training, finding an excellent teacher at Solihull dog training club to show her the ropes. She has never looked back.

"I have known nothing other than working with animals," says Christine. "I was really lucky to become involved in training from such an early age and find my early mentor. My motto since has been if you want to learn, latch on to someone who is good at what they do and learn from them."

For Christine, running her own business was a natural outcome of the work she is driven to do. She started the college (an accredited member of the Open College Network) in 1996 to "help pet owners with their pet's challenging behaviour, and show enthusiastic animal lovers how to achieve the very best from their relationship with their pets," and in 2000 set up Pets Behaving Badly to work directly with the animals themselves.

It's not only dogs she deals with, Christine has progressed to specialise in the behaviour of parrots, cats, and horses, using a variety of methods to deal with their problems which include natural healing techniques such as Reiki. She's recently launched her Pets Behaving Badly Network which, she says, "is an umbrella organisation allowing new trainers to gain experience with the back up of our knowledge and skill."

Christine has been a one-woman show for much of her time in business, but has benefited from the "fantastic support" that Women into Rural Enterprise (WiRE) have offered, providing opportunities to network and reducing feelings of isolation. She feels they have been "inspirational and motivational."

*"...if you want to learn, latch on to someone who is good at what they do and learn from them"*

Though it's clear her efforts are paying off, Christine feels that initially her progress could have been impeded by rigidly sticking to a business plan. She says "Sometimes you just have to do it, and ask yourself 'What's the worst that can happen?' Go with your gut instinct but be quick to know when something isn't working."



**Pets Behaving Badly & College of Pet Animal Studies**  
*Teaching animals how to behave and humans how to teach them*

Established in 2000 (college established 1996)

Contracts 4 independent tutors on a self-employed basis

Based in Buildwas, Shropshire

Tel: 01952 433231

Email: [petsbehavingbadly@aol.com](mailto:petsbehavingbadly@aol.com)

Website: [www.petsbehavingbadly.com](http://www.petsbehavingbadly.com)



## Contact List

The Accelerating Women's Enterprise Partnership (AWE) which is funded by the European Social Fund under the EQUAL community initiative programme, brings together a number of leading agencies operating at the cutting edge of women's enterprise development spanning the English regions. Together they have developed a programme of activities, which includes, training, access to finance, pre and post business support, networking, mentoring and award schemes.

### Women Into the Network (WIN), University of Durham Business School, Durham



An award winning networking initiative which supports aspiring and existing women entrepreneurs. WIN achieves this by integrating women into existing and new business networks and by bridging the gap between women and the support available.

Contact: Dinah Bennett  
Email: [info@networkingwomen.co.uk](mailto:info@networkingwomen.co.uk)  
Telephone: 0191 3345502 Fax: 0191 3345144  
Website: [www.networkingwomen.co.uk](http://www.networkingwomen.co.uk)

### WEETU (Women's Employment, Enterprise and Training Unit), Norwich



WEETU works in partnership to help women deal with social and economic change through access to training and high quality employment and enterprise support services.

Contact: Janet Davies  
Email: [info@weetu.org](mailto:info@weetu.org)  
Telephone: 01603 767367  
Website: [www.weetu.org](http://www.weetu.org)

### Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE), Shropshire



Dynamic networking and business club aimed at helping rural women in every way possible, towards starting and maintaining their own rural enterprise.

Contact: Izzy Warren-Smith  
Email: [info@wireuk.org](mailto:info@wireuk.org)  
Telephone: 01952 815338  
Website: [www.wireuk.org](http://www.wireuk.org)

### Bolton Business Ventures Ltd, Bolton



Offer innovative, quality services to women starting in business or already established. Includes Centre of Excellence for Women in Business, including a loan fund, to meet the specific needs of women.

Contact: Sylvia Philips  
Email: [sp@bbvonline.net](mailto:sp@bbvonline.net)  
Telephone: 01204 391400  
Website: [www.bbvonline.net](http://www.bbvonline.net) [www.eveworks.net](http://www.eveworks.net)



### PROWESS, Norwich

PROWESS is the UK-wide advocacy network for the promotion of women's enterprise support. The PROWESS vision is to create an environment where equal numbers of women and men are starting and growing businesses.

Contact: Erika Watson  
Email: [admin@prowess.org.uk](mailto:admin@prowess.org.uk)  
Telephone: 01603 762355  
Website: [www.prowess.org.uk](http://www.prowess.org.uk)



### Street Cred (Quaker Social Action), London

Micro-credit and business support for women starting up in business in the East End of London.

Contact: Clare Griffiths, Judith Moran  
Email: [streetcred@dial.pipex.com](mailto:streetcred@dial.pipex.com) [judith.qsa@dial.pipex.com](mailto:judith.qsa@dial.pipex.com)  
Telephone: 020 7 7299267, 020 7 2501511  
Website: [www.quakerssocialaction.com](http://www.quakerssocialaction.com)



### Rural Women's Network (Voluntary Action Cumbria), Penrith

Supporting women in Cumbria to realise their full potential through enterprise support and the development of personal and workplace skills.

Contact: Gillian Murdoch  
Email: [info@ruralwomen.org.uk](mailto:info@ruralwomen.org.uk)  
Telephone: 01768 210997  
Website: [www.ruralwomen.org.uk](http://www.ruralwomen.org.uk)



### Train 2000, Liverpool

Providing quality innovative business support for women across Merseyside, including: personal development & business planning training, information, advice and counselling, business loan fund for would-be and existing women entrepreneurs.

Contact: Lisa McMullan  
Email: [lisa@train2000.org.uk](mailto:lisa@train2000.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0151 2366601  
Website: [www.train2000.org.uk](http://www.train2000.org.uk)



### Women's Business Network (North West) Ltd

Facilitates the development and creation of women's business networks throughout the North West and links these networks to provide an environment of peer support and development of business opportunities.

Contact: Ruth Livesey  
Email: [ruth@wbn.org.uk](mailto:ruth@wbn.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0151 6444577  
Website: [www.wbn.org.uk](http://www.wbn.org.uk)