

"Updated and revised  
version of the book –  
Business in Red Shoes"

**Women: How to Create, Setup  
and Run Your Own Business**

# **BUSINESS START-UP YOUR OWN WAY**

**Rebecca Jones  
The Red Shoe Biz Woman**



**Women: How to Create, Set up and Run Your  
Own Business**

**Business Start-Up  
Your Own Way**

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**Thank you to all the women I have had the privilege to meet; who continue to inspire me in my work, and to my family who have enabled me to do a job I love.**

**In business we must watch and learn, plan and research, consider and re-consider, but there comes a time for action. Now is your time for action and, with my help, you can become a successful business woman.**

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## CHAPTER TWO – DEVELOP A BUSINESS TO SUIT YOU AND YOUR LIFE

Let's take a little time now to think about you. What type of person are you? What keeps you interested, motivated and gives you that buzz? What are you good at? What makes you happy? The easiest way to answer such questions is to recall things we have done in the past which have inspired us. For instance, arranging a fundraising event or managing plans for your wedding or a big holiday abroad may have given you that buzz. Maybe you have felt particularly inspired at work when developing a new product or putting a new team together. Whatever it is, keep it in mind while we consider exactly what you want from your business. Running a business is hard work so it is critical that you enjoy it; that you feel passionate and motivated enough to drive the business forward even during tough times.

It is possible to make some silly mistakes as you are swept along with the excitement of starting your own business. Most surprisingly, often the biggest mistake I find is around the suitability of the business for you. For instance, I once met a lady who had set up an online baby shop where she would have no contact with customers, yet she admitted to being a people person and found being at home all day with little human contact was making her very unhappy. Had she gone through the exercise we are about to do, and asked herself what kind of person she was and what made her happy at work, she wouldn't have started up such a venture in the first

place, or she would have at least tweaked her business idea to ensure it involved some contact with others. Similarly, I knew an artist who took space in a studio with other artists but found the constant chatter and people coming in and out a distraction to her and her work. It would have been far more appropriate for her to work on her own, possibly from home.

Now think about what you need from your business to keep you personally happy. Do you relish working alone or with others? Do you prefer working indoors or out, enjoy variety or routine? Working for yourself enables you to make choices about the way you work. That's one of the clear benefits to most business women I know, so you should certainly take advantage of that freedom to choose a business and method of working which makes you happy, motivates you and makes the most of what you are good at.

So let's now map out some of the elements which make you the unique person you are.

<p><b>What are you good at?</b> (For example, you might be particularly good at: organisation, financial planning, getting on with people, etc)</p>	<p><b>What makes or did make you happy at work?</b> (This might include: being with others, helping others, learning new things, variety, getting out and about, and so on)</p>
<p><b>What skills do you have?</b> (Your main competencies might include: craft work, cooking, teaching, selling, communicating, designing, writing, and so on)</p>	<p><b>What knowledge do you have?</b> (You might have knowledge about a sector or information which few people know about, such as technical knowledge or industry-specific expertise)</p>

### **WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

What success will look like for you will partially be determined by what you do and don't want from your lifestyle. Maybe you don't want to have to travel and be away from home or maybe you don't want the responsibility of staff. Lots of business owners don't do it for the money but for a more balanced lifestyle. An example is the owner of a B&B, who only opens part of the year, earning her enough money so she and her partner can spend three months in the sun over winter.

It is worth listing some of the things you do and don't want as a result of running your business so that you can consider them during your business development stage.

<b>What I don't want</b>	<b>What I do want</b>
e.g. to work weekends	e.g. flexibility and some time to myself

You may want recognition, money, more time off, respect from others, or flexibility from your business. These and so much more are all possible if you plan, work hard and consider how you will achieve them (but more about that in the planning chapter).

Take some time now to evaluate your responses to the above points. Can you now see that there are some things which make you happy and confident which you must consider when you are developing your business? For example, if you have

said you like variety and being out and about, being locked away in an office five days a week is not likely to motivate you. Conversely you are likely to feel miserable. This is a simple exercise which so many budding entrepreneurs forget to carry out as they rush headlong into their new venture. However, it is so crucial to evaluate these areas, so that you end up doing something that you are confidently competent at, making the most of your skills and expertise, in a working environment which makes you happy.

### **WHAT BUSINESS HOURS WILL YOU BE ABLE TO KEEP?**

While we consider how to ensure that your business fits your lifestyle, it's important to consider the hours you feel able to put into your business from the outset. Be realistic about the hours you will be able to work, considering everything else you still need and want to do in your life and also the hours that will be needed to make your business a success.

For instance, let's say you're teaching piano lessons and the hourly rate in your area is £20. If you need to earn £300 a week, you will need to work a minimum of 15 hours a week, that's without considering any costs for advertising, materials, tax or insurance. You might be planning on only working Monday until Thursday. What's more, your customers are primarily children after school, so you may only be able to teach after 4pm. You would need to average four pupils a night, meaning you would be working until 8pm. Do these hours suit you? How realistic do you think it is to get four pupils, four evenings a week, every week of the year, summer and winter?

We will examine how to generate custom in more detail later on, for now let's concentrate on the hours. After all, as outlined in Chapter One, control and flexibility around the hours you work is a key reason for starting a business of your own. As such, the hours you work needs vital consideration. It's true to

say that you tend to get out what you put in. There are only a few exceptions where people work very low hours and get paid very well, especially during the start-up phase of their business.

### **HONEST HOURS**

Consider the fact that if you only work a few hours, it will take you a long time to get your business built up. Your business may not be as successful as you wanted it to be and customers may become frustrated that they can never get hold of you or they have to wait too long for the product or service to be delivered.

However, if you work too many hours, your family and friends may get fed up because they never see you. You may become fed up with the business as it is taking up too much of your time. Also, I believe that answering emails at two in the morning can make customers think that you're not in control and can't cope. You will also find that, if the majority of your time is spent on the business, you will not have time to rejuvenate. As a busy woman, whether you are a mother or not, you are no doubt already aware that time management is a fine art. It can be difficult to get the balance right when starting your own business – you need to work hard and put in the time and effort to get it off the ground and sustain its growth. However, you may have started the business to give you more flexibility and improved work-life balance, so you don't want to have less time with your family as a result, or your reality may be at odds with your reasons for starting your own business. Clever planning of working hours is, therefore, key. Often you'll need to make sacrifices (usually when it comes to me-time) at least initially, until you can afford to employ help.

Many women I work with, who are now working more hours than they ever did during their employed existence, need to be reminded that one of the reasons they went into business in

the first place was to have more time for their family, for hobbies or for themselves. Of course, many people understand and accept that they will need to work excessive hours to build up the business rapidly, at least at first. The long-term aim being to take time out once the business is established. Anyone entering into self-employment must be prepared to work long hours to launch the business. However, it's important to be careful not to fall into the trap that so many new entrepreneurs fall into; i.e. working unreasonable hours and never reviewing if self-employment is really giving them what they want.

If you feel that you can't give many hours to your business, consider whether you are ready for self-employment. Whilst I believe you can make your business flexible, running a business will take up time and requires commitment and a large dose of persistence. As mentioned earlier, you could consider other alternatives, maybe running it part-time, going freelance, working with a partner or working for another small business to see the way they do it and discover whether that suits you.

Ultimately, this is your business and you can build it how you want. Either by putting in extensive hours in the first few months, before becoming more flexible later on, or benefiting from the flexibility that your business can provide from the outset to suit the needs of your life and family. For example, having run my own business since the age of 19, when the children were young I rarely worked during July and August as the children were at home. It tended to be a quiet time of the year in any case, with many clients taking holidays. I took advantage of this and I didn't take on any projects during this time, ensuring that I completed any ongoing work during June.

I still kept in contact with emails and enquiries but nothing major. Clients knew this and were happy to wait if necessary. As long as people are kept in the loop they understand that

everyone needs to take time off. We all need a break to recharge our batteries; it's good for us. Indeed, when you're employed you would get annual leave.

Times changed for me when my children grew older, so I adapted my working life once again to my needs and of those around me. My daughter leaving home and her brother entering high school gave me more flexibility with the types of work I took on and new business ventures I became involved with. As our life as a family changed, so did my business, and this can happen for you too. That's the beauty of the flexibility which running a business brings. As a small business owner you are nimble, adaptable, and flexible.

Naturally, deciding your working hours based around holidays, pursuing your own interests and lifestyle choices, is a key benefit of working for yourself. The vital consideration is to ensure that all stakeholders in your business (customers, suppliers, staff, and so on) are aware of your working hours and that you (and they) know how you will be able to leave the business should you need to go away or are unable to work for any period of time.

***Fitting your business into your already busy life can sometimes be a bit of a challenge. Remember Lucy, the single mother of three who started her own PR agency? When she established her business, she knew she would only be able to work during school hours and occasionally in the evening when the children had gone to bed. She also knew that this would mean she had to select projects which wouldn't require her to travel far or to regularly work evenings. Lucy was realistic that some days the children would be ill and that the holidays would need to be planned like a military operation.***

***However, her determination to be there for her children kept her focused on building a business which would work***

***for her and her family. As the children have grown up, so too has her business, as has her ability to take on a wider variety of projects. Being honest with clients about deadlines and setting realistic work levels keeps Lucy level headed and in control of her business, rather than the business controlling her.***

- Consider the hours of business your potential customers might expect you to be open
- Consider which hours a) you are at your best in terms of creativity and productivity and b) suit your lifestyle and personal needs
- Be realistic about how many hours you can actually do, both in the short term and in the long term. What type of help will you need to keep to these hours? How will you ensure the business is providing quality service even when you're not there?
- Ensure honesty. Whether you decide to run the business part time, or only at the weekends, work school hours or only evenings; ensure that people will have the same professional experience whenever they approach your business. If your advert or sign on the door says you are open from 10-3 then make sure you are open; a hand written note saying "Sorry, popped out" can be more than a little irritating to a potential client
- Communicate. Let customers, prospects, staff and suppliers know if you need to take a break or make any changes to your existing hours
- Be prepared. Flexibility works both ways. While it affords you time off to perform tasks you need to do, you may have to take on additional responsibility or have back-up plans, for example, if childcare arrangements collapse.

*Although Joy had no direct childcare responsibilities when she opened her salon, her daughter would often ask her to help out with her granddaughter. Joy tells of one occasion where, in the middle of a packed salon, her granddaughter began screaming. Unable to pacify her and deal with the customers simultaneously, Joy gave her granddaughter a pen and note pad to entertain her. This worked for a while. But what a shame it was the appointments book which next drew her granddaughter's eye! Joy and her staff spent the next month having to write appointments in over crayon scribbles and smeared biscuit, hardly professional.*

### **HOW MUCH INCOME DO YOU NEED?**

Diligent preparation is one of the most important aspects of starting a business of your own, not only when it comes to what you put in to the business, but also when it comes to what you take out of it.

Be realistic about your ability to earn enough money from the outset. All businesses take a little time to establish and build up. Taking a wage out of a start-up business can be difficult in the first few months. You need to ensure that you will be able to pay your bills and live as well as affording costs of running and promoting the business. I recommend saving up enough money before you start to keep you going for a minimum of six months. It's reasonable to think that you will be able to take some money out after that point, all being well.

- Consider what you actually need. List all your expenses honestly. How much do you really spend each week? List everything you would need to pay out over a 12 month period. This will include insurances, Christmas and birthday gifts, mortgage payments or rent, household bills, shopping, clothing, petrol, car maintenance and tax, gym membership fees, nursery fees, magazine subscriptions and so on. Also allow for those one off bills

like repairs to the washing machine, new tyres or your car's MOT. Total it all up. Gulp! (I know, it's always more than you think)

- Figure out how much will you need to spend on your business, both in terms of initial start-up expenses (stock, website, business cards and tools to help you) and ongoing running costs (rent, stationery, printer cartridges, salaries, tax and so on)
- Take advantage of the many online tools or software available to help you calculate your personal expenses and consider areas of saving
- Review those living expenses realistically. Look for things you can cut back on, such as coffee with friends, satellite channels you never watch, or consider reviewing suppliers of gas, telephone and other utilities to save some of your hard earned cash
- Seek out additional ways of generating income. I know lots of people who rent out a spare room in their house, do some occasional temping work, or declutter and sell their second-hand goods on eBay or at car boot sales, to bring in a little cash to keep them going during business start-up. As mentioned earlier, starting your business part-time while retaining a part-time job or evening work may be viable
- Consider the effect the change in your income and outgoings may have on your family. Will they have to go without things for a little while? How long will that be and how fair is that? Discuss the reality of the situation with your partner and whether they can support you during your business start-up and, if so, for how long. It's best to agree things in principle to ensure you both feel there is an element of control over the situation

- Estimate when you are most likely to start generating income from the business itself and how. Budget accordingly. If you are planning to live off savings for a while make yourself a sensible budget and work out how long it will realistically last before you will need to take money out of the business.

No one said this was going to be easy. This is a vital part of your planning process. Remember what we have already discussed about making this business fit around your needs.

### **KEEP CLEAR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN BUSINESS AND YOUR OWN LIFE**

It's all too easy when you work for yourself to blur the boundaries between your personal home life and your business, particularly if you work from home. A business friend of mine told me that business provided her with a heady mix of work and family, that she believed you needed to concentrate on only one at any one time. She found that, even if that is 30 minutes for the family and 30 minutes for the business, it was by having boundaries and keeping them separate that she found neither the family nor the business suffered and she could maintain some level of sanity.

*Clare ran her 24 /7 plumbing business from home with a hotline into her family lounge. The phone constantly rang and, whilst she was dealing with other people's emergencies, mini crises would erupt in her own home, whilst her ever growing brood of children were left to their own devices. Friends and family began to feel awkward about visiting in case she was busy, and her relationship with her partner began to break down. It became clear that while it was one thing for the business to be a massive part of her life, for Clare it had become almost the only thing in her life. With help and support we turned her business around and she now uses an external firm to manage her out-of-hours calls and pass them on to her staff to handle. Her children have*

***their Mum back to help with homework and after school activities and her partner and family are happy to have her back to relative normality.***

***When PR agency owner Lucy started running her business from home she was on the phone to a potential big client when her baby, sat in the baby chair next to her desk, filled his nappy. She had two options: 1) try to finish the call as quickly as possible and then change the baby or tell the customer “I have to go, baby has filled his nappy.” Just think how I felt when she told me she had done the latter! Oh dear!***

***In another incident, Lucy’s six year old son proudly told one of her big corporate clients that she was in the toilet and couldn’t come to the phone. When asked if he could call back shortly, her son replied, ‘She’s locked the door so she could be a little while.’ Maintaining a high level of professionalism at all times is crucial in business; another reason to create distinct work-based boundaries within the home and vice versa.***

Similarly, when my son was young he ran into my office to tell me he had done his own shoe laces. This was a big moment for us and luckily I had an understanding client on the phone at the time who knew I was a working Mum. However, this led to the rule in the house that ‘If Mummy is on her work phone, you mustn’t speak across her.’ My children have been known to pass me notes and use sign language to let me know what they are doing. I don’t think this has harmed them in any way (it has, however, helped them to develop their creative communication skills) and they understand the importance of customers to my business and have learnt that sometimes it is possible to wait five minutes.

When it comes to the telephone, don’t let the kids answer it or anyone else who will give a less than professional image. Be

organised and ready for when the phone rings. Have a pad and pen by the phone, as there is nothing worse than listening to someone scrabbling around for a pen when you are trying to discuss business with them. They may laugh, but what are they really thinking?

If you're unable to ensure your telephone is going to be answered professionally consider an answering service. You can outsource both the handling of your phone calls and other secretarial duties to a virtual assistant.

Be realistic about how you will work and live and keep clear boundaries between the two, with 'no business here' zones across every area of your life and 'do not disturb' parameters during working hours. Even your wardrobe is likely to be divided into formal work and informal home clothes. Have 'no business' times of day as well as 'zones.' For example, there are some days I don't have my mobile switched on. Taking time away from the business to do things with friends or family often means you will return to the business with a new perspective and re-established vigour. Having friends who are in no way linked to your business, whom you never talk about the business with, affords you the priceless opportunity to relax and be yourself. Indeed, this becomes increasingly important as your business grows.

Despite creating no business zones, there will be some areas of overlap. Indeed, if you are running a busy business from home there will be some inevitable impact on the family home, no matter how organised you think you are; from business paperwork and supplies strewn about, to the home phone line tied up with work calls, clients visiting and so on.

The key to minimise disruption to family and work is to keep everyone informed about the rules, boundaries, plans, events and so on. Consider the impact additional comings and goings or increased noise may have on your neighbours, as well as you

and your family. Inform your family and friends about your new way of life. They should be aware that you are implementing some major changes and what this means to them. Hopefully, this will give them the opportunity to see how they will be able to support you to achieve this new stage of your life.

How will your business impact on your daily life? When I was young, my mum worked from home making stuffed toys. Many tea times were spent sat amongst teddy bears and rag dolls, with evenings spent stuffing legs and arms ready for her to make up the next day. It didn't do us any harm (in fact it inspired me in a way) but I'm sure sometimes my parents felt like the house was being invaded by toys.

As such, it's worth establishing some boundaries and rules:

- Let family know your working hours so they can avoid them unless it's an emergency. Ban people from popping in for coffee during working hours if you're working from home. People wouldn't do it if you were at work elsewhere, so the same rule needs to apply. At our house, friends and family only visit after the kids are home from school as that's when I tend to stop for the day. Just because I am at home doesn't mean I'm free and available for a coffee and a chat. Gently remind them you are actually working, as many people forget. You'll be amazed by the amount of people who don't consider this
- Keep personal phone calls to a minimum too. If you're with a customer, you hardly want your best friend to call about her latest love-life disaster. I find setting some parameters works, such as asking friends to only call me after 12 noon or to try to call me in the evenings
- Consider how you might deal with enquiries outside of your normal working hours

- Focus on your business and your life SEPARATELY. Do not mix the two up. We all need some down-time where we are free from business dealings and likewise time to focus on our business, undisturbed
- If you can have a second phone line installed for the business or only use your mobile to receive business calls it can make it easier to ensure the phone is always answered professionally.

### **YOUR BUSINESS LOCATION AND YOU**

The topic of maintaining clear boundaries between work and home leads to the important question of where you will run your business from. You will need to decide whether you require business premises or not. If you're planning on running a shop or a business where customers need to come to you on a regular basis, business premises are likely to be a must. Yet many businesses in the UK are run from home very successfully. Running your business from home will provide you with more flexibility in your working hours and you may find it easier to arrange work around your caring responsibilities or other personal needs.

Clearly, where you will run this business from will have an impact on many areas: on costs, family life, your well-being. Choosing the right location is key. Many women I work with start running their business from home. Some see this only as a temporary measure as they plan to grow their business and take on suitable business premises in the future. Others expect they will always run the business from home. Alternatively, some businesses require premises from the very beginning.

### **HOME RUN BUSINESSES**

Working from home really works for some people. They like the flexibility and work-life balance it provides, the lower cost and financial risk in establishing the business plus the lack of travelling required. Others tell me they find it lonely and

difficult to motivate themselves into setting a routine and keeping to it.

Consider the following:

- Keep set business hours
- Create your own work space and keep everything for the business in one designated room of the house or use a separate building such as a shed, converted garage or garden office. This could be the spare bedroom, a converted attic, the garages or shed. Google and eBay began life in their founders' garages and many of my clients run successful businesses from garden sheds, outhouses and lofts
- Ensure you have space to store your work things even if that is just boxes in a corner or a cupboard
- Establish some way of having some human contact, ideally with other business owners and those with similar interests to yourself. Business networks may be a good place to start. Alternatively, I know women who get their human contact from joining a sports club or painting class. Whatever works for you, just make sure you do get out and about at least a few times a week to avoid the cabin fever which can suppress some entrepreneurs
- Stay motivated by setting yourself some ground rules about how and when you will be working. Experience tells me that planning the week ahead and setting targets and rewards for yourself works. While it can be tempting to have a lie in, work in your pyjamas, sit with a laptop on a comfy sofa or get distracted by the TV, I find that, in order to stay motivated and focused it's best to get up as if you were going to work outside of the home, dress reasonably smart, have breakfast, clear away and then get

to work. Discipline is critical. If you don't put the effort in you won't be paid. It's as simple as that.

Whatever you decide; make it work for you. Remember what you decided early on in this book about your desires to develop a business which suited you and your needs. Don't be over distracted by the lure of business premises before you really need them. They may look good, but can you really afford them? They will certainly eat into your revenues.

There may be some legal issues in using your home to run your business, depending on the business and the type of activities carried out there. It may also affect your mortgage and home insurance. You may also become liable to pay business rates. Seek professional advice before you start trading from your kitchen table or spare room. Some home businesses will have to have specific planning permission. Check with your local council.

I used to work from our spare bedroom until my son was born and then I moved into the study, which I shared with the rest of the family. Sharing a study didn't work for me so I opted to move my work away from home, taking an office on a business park for my team and I for many years. More recently, I have changed the business and I now work from home again, as it currently suits me to do so. I find it's best to do whatever suits you, your business strategy and those around you at any given time, even if that means making some changes to the business.

Business owners who work from home talk about needing to be able to escape from it all, otherwise they feel like they are constantly at work. I work from 9 – 12, take a lunch break and eat a proper lunch then work for another few hours. I generally take a break, then go for a walk or get some fresh air and a change of scene by popping out for the paper. I can always go back to my desk and work for a while longer if I feel the need. The point is that it's wise to take a break and get a change of

scenery if you work from home; another reason why setting clear physical boundaries is so important – to distinguish areas for work from areas for living, relaxing and socialising.

### **TAKING PREMISES**

If you're taking a work space away from home there is a lot more to consider. We will talk about the cost in more detail during your financial planning. For now, let's consider if the shop, warehouse or office you wish to take is going to work for you. Is the atmosphere right for you? In terms of productivity, will you be able to work to your best of your ability? For example, I know of women who set up their first businesses over chip shops or on industrial parks. These locations were hardly inspiring, but it's all they could afford. I do understand that, however, we are trying to make this business something you feel happy with and content to run. The location of the business will really impact on how you feel about going to work every day.

Taking premises can eat into much needed cash resources which is why many people avoid doing so until their business outgrows their home office. However, some businesses need premises from day one.

If you decide to take premises, shop about for good deals and the right location. Don't make the mistake of going for a cheaper out of town location without considering the extra you will need to spend to get people to find you. Signage, adverts or PR can all add up so that your cheaper rent doesn't look so cheap anymore. Consider all consequences that each potential location brings with it.

Be realistic about how much premises will really cost you. It's not just about rent. What about the rates, electricity and telephone? Does it need furnishing or decorating? You also need to look at the terms of any lease or sale of business premises: what are you getting for your money? What extras

might you be faced with? If you're renting, what deposit is required and when will the rent be paid? Fundamentally, are the premises suitable for your business plans? If you need to break out of the lease agreement, how easy will that be? Will you need to gain a change of use from the council? How will other business owners feel about your business opening next to theirs and vice versa? You may also like to consider flexible business premises solutions.

Many towns and cities now have office spaces which are available on a flexible basis. Smaller offices within larger premises can be hired at fixed monthly costs allowing you to plan for the expenses. Alternatively, serviced offices are another viable option for some small businesses which provide you with more than an empty shell, including furniture, IT support and even a receptionist to answer calls and take messages. These will often have meeting rooms on site which you can hire out as needed to avoid paying rent on an empty meeting room. Many small businesses use virtual offices, which can handle their mail and manage telephone calls, whilst also providing the perception that you have a professional office while you may actually be working from home. This can be a solution if you don't want to use your home address on your business documents and wish to convey a professional image by having a city based address. Ask the local council if they have incubator units or speak to a large firm who may have space they are willing to lease to you.

Instead of taking on a shop for selling your goods, consider whether you could sell on a market stall or at events and country fairs. The overall cost of the stall hire and pitch fees are likely to be lower and more flexible than a permanent site such as a shop. Be careful not to go for the first available option. Look around for a solution which best suits your needs (both current and future) and those of your customers. Once you have decided on your business premises, be it a shop or

office, get someone with experience in business leases or sales to help you through the process, check the paperwork and help you secure the best deal. Sorting out your business premises is a big step in starting your business, it can be the key to your success. Ask for help to ensure you get it right.

***When Lucy started her business she worked from home, but with a small house and three busy children to accommodate, running the business from the table in the corner of the living room soon became unbearable. She couldn't afford the rent of an office nor did she want any big commitment. Lucy was thrilled when one of her clients offered her a small office in their building for a basic monthly rent. It worked well initially for Lucy. However, soon the client became more demanding of her time, popping in when they felt like it and making it difficult for Lucy to give equal time and attention to her other clients. Lucy decided it was time to leave when she overheard the Managing Director talking to visitors in the hall way telling them that Lucy was their PR Manager and making out she was a full time member of staff. Lucy left soon after and had a lovely and particularly un-shed like garden office built. Subsequently, she now has the best of both worlds: a personal space to work in whilst still being at home.***

Whether you decide to work from home, from a purpose built office in the garden or take premises, ensure your work place is a comfortable place to be. Believe me, you will spend many hours there so you may as well make it nice for you. Things don't have to cost much to ensure you have a great working space for your new business.

#### **MEETINGS AT HOME**

Consider whether it is wise to set up meetings in your home. Think about your safety as well as the image it portrays. If you

want your image to be a home based friendly service, that's fine. However, not all customers will be happy to meet you sat amongst the trappings of your family life. It can be a bit too personal. Many a time I have been to someone's home for a meeting to be sat next to a smelly dog, remains of last night's tea in the sink or, on one occasion, a baby lamb sat under the desk! (Don't ask!)

The alternative is to meet clients at their premises or hire a meeting space for these occasions. Many places now offer meeting rooms by the hour or day at reasonable rates. It's also becoming more acceptable in some businesses to meet in the coffee shop near their office or a hotel bar.

You may have to re-evaluate working from home as your business grows and expands. Consider aspects such as storage of stock, admin and paperwork. If you need staff will you be happy to have them come into your home, or could your first few members of staff work elsewhere, possibly from their own home? As your business grows you may need to get more business space without moving out of your home. You could consider a garden office or an extension at this time.

## **TRAVEL**

Some business sectors require regular travel. It's important to consider the impact this will have on your life, your family, your pets and your health. Is this the new way of life you have been planning or does travel not suit your dream?

Be clear about what times and in which circumstances you are prepared to travel. If someone then calls and asks you to attend a meeting at the other end of the country, you will be ready with your response because you have already decided what you will and won't accept as reasonable.

There is more to travelling than the time and the cost. When Joy needed to travel to promotional events she would worry

about the security of her home and her personal security returning to an empty house late at night. It wasn't something she had done before. She decided to find a solution to her safety concerns by fitting lights, alarms and using a reputable taxi firm rather than change her business plans.

Consider how you might use technology as an alternative to travel. Video conferencing technologies, such as Skype, have come of age, while real time messaging such as Microsoft Messenger and other web based meeting solutions can enable you to have conversations other than over the phone.

### **WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE AND HOW WILL THAT IMPACT ON THE BUSINESS?**

We've taken some time to review the business side of things in terms of location, hours and so on. Now it's time to refocus on you again. Think for a few minutes about what is going on in your life and how that may impact on your business dreams; from the arrival of a new family member or future plans to have a family, to moving to a new area, ageing parents or other dependents requiring care. Perhaps these responsibilities will increase during the next few years. Will you be able to cope with these responsibilities and build a business?

*Clare took over the plumbing company when her son was at full time nursery. The cost of the nursery ate into the little profit Clare was making during the early stages of her business ownership. Once little Ryan began school the cost decreased, but the hassle increased. Nursery had been open 8-6 and school was only 9-3; the school holidays seemed to come around quickly and, with little family support, Clare had to re-plan her business to enable her to manage this new way of life. As her family grew Clare adapted her business by taking on part time staff to cover some hours and being more systematic with her work to enable her to take more time off out of term time.*

The beauty of running a small business is that your enterprise is far more agile and nimble than large corporate counterparts. You can adapt your business to your ever-changing life as long as you set it up in such a way that you are able to do so; shrinking, growing and shifting your business to suit you and your responsibilities as and when necessary. As long as customers see little effect on the products they purchase and the service they receive, you will be surprised how adaptable many businesses can be.

### **YOU AND YOUR HEALTH**

Keeping yourself fit and healthy is an important part of being self-employed. If you are unable to work due to poor health, how will the business carry on without you? And, if you have staff, will they know how to manage? Apart from having manuals and plans in place to ensure others are easily able to step up to the mark, you should make sure you take care of yourself. Eating healthily and only snacking on brain food (nuts, seeds, fruit and so on) are all important, especially if you are working from home and can access the kitchen at any time. I learned early on that stopping to eat a proper meal was never wasted time. Equally, getting as much good quality sleep as possible is also important.

Many self-employed people will tell you that you must look after yourself. An unhealthy person is less likely to be reliable for customers and, as a self-employed person, if you are not well enough to work, it's more than likely that you will not be earning. Sick pay is generally a benefit that only employed people earn. I strongly recommend having a backup plan if you're ill or you need to take time off to care for a sick family member. I have learned that you're nearly always struck down with something when the business is at its busiest, or when you're needed to attend an important meeting or you have an unrealistic deadline to meet.

You'll be pleased to hear that taking time to rejuvenate yourself, with a few days off, a holiday or some personal pampering time can boost your creativity and productivity levels. See getting your hair done or a massage not as a special treat but an essential part of your business success! Perfect.

### **THE EFFECT OF BUSINESS OWNERSHIP ON YOUR ROLE AS A MUM**

If you are a Mum, consider the effect business ownership will have on your role as a parent. This can be positive and negative. The positives, such as being able to take the children to and from school, attend school sports days and such like, will make up for the times you can't be there for them.

*Lucy developed her business model so she could be there for the kids. She set the times of the day to suit their school hours and only having appointments with clients during those times. Inevitably there are times she can't be there for the children, but she believes it has had a beneficial effect on her relationship with them. She is now there for them more often than not. And, on the odd occasion she needs to be away from them, they hardly notice she isn't there. Lucy does need to consider the cost of occasional childcare, but the peace of mind it provides outweighs the costs.*

If you believe you are doing this for the benefit of your children and to support your family, consider if they actually want this to be the case. You really will need them on your side some days. I often had to explain to the children, who were bored during school holidays, that we couldn't go out that day as Mum had work to do for a client. In those instances, I remind them that on other days we get the benefit of me being at home and they usually understand (well that and some form of bribery often helps). Starting up a business without the support of your family can be very tough indeed. I have watched many

women struggle with balancing family and business. Don't let this happen to you.

The good news is: my children and the children of many of my clients have told me what amazing and inspirational role models their Mums have been for them. Additionally, you will be pleased to know that children of enterprising parents are more likely to be successful business people in the future. My Mum always had some money making plan on the go when we were kids. Helping her stuff and wrap bears and make labels in the run up to Christmas was great fun and no doubt paid for my new bike that Christmas. Kids need good role models and what better for them than seeing Mum become successful, happy and confident. As long as that is the result that running a business is having on them. Children don't want to see a Mum who is over stretched and utterly stressed.

With that in mind, you will need help sometimes. Consider then how you will manage early morning starts, late nights and evening events, time away or illness. Try to develop a support network around you. As you know, when my children were young I would take most of the summer off to be with them; it was only six weeks a year. During that period I would slow down the work and work only evenings and weekends, when their Dad was around to help out. This also meant I could help my full time working friends with their children during the holidays. I could often ask them to return the favour during the school term when I was stuck. More recently, as the children have grown, things have changed and I now have a second business in tourism so we tend to be busy in the summer, when the children can now pitch in.

### **ARE YOU REALLY SUPERWOMAN?**

It's not that likely that you and superman are best friends. I learned very quickly that I wasn't superwoman; the outfit wouldn't really work for me anyway. Seriously though, please

accept that you can't do everything and, if you try to, you can make yourself ill. By taking time to consider what you need to put in place to enable you to run and grow your business organically rather than manically, is time well spent. It is likely that you will need some occasional help. So, if someone offers their help, accept it. Don't see it as a failure on your part, you have nothing to prove. A great thing about the world of entrepreneurship is that people love giving advice. While people may not always be generous with discounts or giving things away, they are more than happy to be generous with the advice they give. Seize that opportunity to learn from others, who can fill the gaps in your knowledge or skills base.

We will talk again about how to best make use of people's help in the business, but for now it's enough to consider that you can ask others for help. While women in general are often inspirational, nobody's perfect. As women we are great at multi-tasking, but you do need to be realistic about what you can take on. Don't be like one of my clients who would call me on her hands-free kit while doing the dishes and all I could hear was flying pots and pans; or the lady who would call me while out on her morning run; heavy breathing and business discussions don't tend to mix! Remember to remain professional at all times, right from the beginning. This is one of my key principles to business success which I repeatedly teach.

## REVIEW OF CHAPTER TWO

- Start now to think about what you want from life and your business. It must suit you and your needs from the outset. It must be appropriate to make you happy and fit your lifestyle
- Think seriously about the hours you can work and how you will manage. Be realistic about how many hours you can actually do, set realistic work levels and be honest with clients about deadlines
- Talk to your family and friends about the way running a business will or possibly won't impact on them and you
- Be realistic about how much income you need. Be prepared. Save enough money to keep you going for six months. We will need to reflect on that again during your business development stage of the book
- Accept you are not superwoman, even if you are an amazing woman. Accept help and develop a support network around you
- Keep distinguished boundaries between your work and life. Set parameters regarding when is acceptable to call/visit
- Take care of yourself. Sleep well, eat well, give yourself some me-time and fresh air.
- Establish ways in which you will have human contact.