
SOMETHING FOR ME!

Starting a business could help you get your life back

As the song goes, "Sometimes its hard being a woman; doing all the things you have to do." Sometimes you need to be superwoman; juggling the demands of the kids, partner, house and work; and for many of us there is also caring for grandchildren or elderly relatives.

I remember when my two were small just wanting a few minutes to soak in a bath or even go to the toilet in peace (come to think of it I still do!!) Don't get me wrong I desperately wanted to have children and being a mum is wonderful, but there comes a point when you realize that everyone sees you as so-and-sos' wife, mother or carer, not as you. You are constantly fulfilling demands for food, toys, clean nappies and cups of tea and you wonder what happened to YOU.

So why am I saying all this in an article about starting a business? I bet you are reading this thinking that I am MAD! Well I am not.

For me starting a business helped solve or at least reduce many of the problems and pressures that I felt. Starting my first company – a UK business called Shop Select – gave me back my identity. I was able to use my years of work experience and do a job I enjoyed, spending other people's money, finding premises for and project managing the opening of shops. Because it was my business I could fit the work around other demands. I could choose to work evenings and weekends when free child care was available (thanks John) and not during school holidays when it was not. I could work mostly from home so I was there if needed. My clients did not need to know I was in the middle of ironing when they phoned so most of the household jobs got done –eventually. I firmly believe everyone benefited; family, clients and, being purely selfish, ME.

Is it an answer for you too?

I believe yes – if you want it to be. Everyone has a talent or experience that they can exploit and it need not be as scary and difficult as you think.

One of the advantages of being a woman in a man's world is that we usually have a husband/partner that is employed and often they earn more than us. If we are thinking of starting a business this gives us a big advantage as we can rely on "him" for a regular income and some financial security. It is generally less risky for us to start a business because we are not giving up the main income. By starting small and working from home there is usually little investment needed so the profits can come in quite early on.

What could I do?

I am sure if you think about the things you enjoy about your current job, or hobbies that you would like to spend more time on, you will think of something that appeals. Many women on St Helena already run businesses like this: making cakes, catering, lace making, card and jewellery making, sewing or book keeping. But there are hundreds of other things you could do instead. Do you like cooking? A friend of mine used to run cookery courses for kids. If you enjoy crafts you could sell them through a retailer or tourist centre, or how about organizing kids' parties where the kids make craft items and get to take them home? Do you enjoy writing? You could help local businesses write business letters, publicity etc. If you are good with a PC you could help other businesses set up their office, offer payroll facilities for businesses where the owner has little time (or love) for paperwork. The possibilities are endless.



The key thing to remember is that it is YOUR business for YOU. It can start small and part time and stay that way, or it can grow and change to suit you. So go on, give it a go, who knows; you may even finish up earning more than he does.

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