



The Centre for
Women's Enterprise
and Employment



Foreword

from Pat Shea-Halson, Chair of Train 2000

Reading the inspiring stories contained within this document fills me with a great sense of pleasure and pride.

It is a pleasure to hear how women have been able to transform their own working lives and make a positive impact on their family, community and the economy as a whole.

I take great pride in being associated with such an enterprising, inspiring and innovative organisation as Train 2000.

Before Train 2000 was formed Merseyside was one of the areas left behind when it came to enterprise in general and women's enterprise in particular.

Yet the founder members of Train 2000 recognised that one of the big stumbling blocks for women's enterprise was that traditional business start-up services failed to see the real and challenging barriers

which were preventing inventive, creative, hard-working women from entering into self-employment. Every issue from working hours, and access to finance to caring responsibilities and a lack of qualifications are very real barriers. But as we know barriers are there to be broken down. They can't stop us.

The founders of Train 2000 knew just how to break down those barriers. They knew that with the availability of specialised business support services, tailored to the specific needs of women, anything was possible.

The ten very different but equally personal success stories contained within these pages show us that.

In the last decade Train 2000 has helped thousands of women like them, including me.

Just over ten years ago I had spent most of my working life in a factory. But I had a dream to

train as a counsellor and own my own counselling business.

Today and thanks to the support of Train 2000 I now own the Centre for Personal Development in Liverpool City Centre where I employ a committed team, train other counsellors to fulfil their potential and have the great opportunity of making a small positive ripple in the pool of life.

It is a great honour to be part of the process which is nurturing and supporting women and helping create the inspirational role models for future generations of women across Merseyside.

We have come a long way in the last ten years and we can't forget there is still a long way to go.

But it should not stop us standing still for a moment to celebrate what can be achieved with organisations like Train 2000 whose future vision is always rooted firmly in the realities and challenges of today.

Kitted Out

A back-packing trip to India provided a life changing opportunity for PE teacher, Fiona McMath.

"I didn't really have any intention of starting my own business when I first went to India. I was a PE teacher and I loved my job including the holidays which allowed me the chance to travel," says Fiona.

But it all changed in the autumn of 1995 when Fiona returned to her job.

"I saw the pupils all dressed in mismatched PE kits and I thought I could do a better job offering good quality kits at affordable prices. I mentioned it to colleagues who said "why don't you then?" "I thought why not? I had survived

on very little in India and seen just how people there live on very little and it gave me the courage to give it a go."

Fiona contacted Train 2000 who helped with her business plan and put her in touch with organisations who were able to provide funding for the new enterprise.

By Christmas that year Fiona had resigned from her post and opened the first of her three specialist uniform stores, Kitted Out in London Road.

"Train 2000 have been a constant source of support and inspiration from the very beginning," said Fiona who now employs over ten staff and owns a further two stores in Aigburth and Waterloo.

"The school uniform market has become very competitive over the past few years but we offer a specialised service and the plan now is to consolidate our position before opening another store in the next five years.

"The last ten years have been a very sharp learning curve and when I first stopped teaching I missed the kids, the staff and of course my salary.

"It was a culture shock and very much sink or swim but being a teacher is very much like being a businesswoman, you have to do a 1,000 things at the same time as well as thinking on your feet!"

www.kittedout.org.uk
T: 0151 709 7009



Fiona McMath

Navarro Training & Consultancy

For many women with families and mortgages to finance, the hardest part of setting up a business is making sure you are able to cover the financial loss of a regular salary.

It was no different for Alison Navarro who set up Navarro Training & Consultancy six years ago.

"The hardest part was making the decision to leave a permanent job whilst still needing to earn the same amount of money."

Yet in the six years since Alison decided to go it alone the business has continued to grow in such a way that not only does she earn her own living from the business but she is joined by her husband, Barry.

"The company offers a range of services including training, facilitation, research, evaluations, business planning, feasibility studies as well as strategy and policy writing.

We work with local community groups, voluntary sector organisations and a variety of public sector agencies and partnerships.

For Alison, who lives in Liverpool owning her own business has provided stability and security as well as balancing her career aspirations and personal goals.

"Train 2000 has always been there supporting me in the production of my business plan and at the end of the phone if I needed any advice."

Alison's future plans include consolidating the current position

and building on the range of services that Navarro Training & Consultancy provides.

"When I first set up the business the aim was to enable me to earn a living but the company has exceeded all my expectations and now provides a living for both my husband and myself.

"It means that we have made a massive achievement in being able to make a difference in ways that suits us both."

"I enjoy a flexibility of working hours and I can use my skills, experience and knowledge to make a difference in ways that use the ideas, innovation and passion that I have."

M: 07970 740 884



Alison Navarro

Venture Productions

“A brilliant production. Superb costumes, scenery and actors. A very slick performance enjoyed by all.”

A fine tribute which may have been written to describe a glittering West End performance where Marie Niblock and Debbie Gornall first met.

Yet that glowing review is just one of many Venture Productions has received since the drama company was set up with the help of Train 2000 eleven years ago.

“At the end of a West End show we were both working on Debbie and I realised we had the skills to start something on our own,” says Marie.

The pair had a passion for theatre in education and with Debbie writing the plays and Marie looking

after the production side, Venture Productions was born.

Now in its 11th year touring schools across the UK, Venture Productions offers plays covering the whole curriculum and providing a lively and entertaining learning experience.

“Our role now is mainly office based and we employ actors to perform the plays which also promote personal attributes including integrity, honesty and courage. At any one time Venture Productions can be performing between 20 and 50 plays a week across the UK.”

Working out of premises in Fazakerley which includes offices and rehearsal space they employ staff to help sell the plays to schools across the country.

“It has been hard work but the feedback we get is very inspiring

and we know we are offering an important service. Owning our own company has allowed us to work in an area we love using the skills we have built up and where we can have a greater control over our work,” Debbie adds.

“When we first started we needed a lot of support and encouragement which we gained from Train 2000 including weekly meetings where we could talk to other women-owned businesses. Train 2000 also helped us gain access to funding which was very important in the early stages of our business.

“It has been eleven hard but rewarding years and our aim is to build on our excellent reputation and reach as many schools as possible.”

www.ventureproductions.co.uk
T: 0151 523 2428



Marie Niblock and Debbie Gornall

Lockwood Design

“Owning my own business makes me feel liberated and proud,” says Fine Art graduate Anna Lockwood.

Anna specialises in traditional upholstery and set up Lockwood Design in Liverpool city centre last July.

“I studied art at university and really enjoyed sculpture. I loved the prettiness and the practicality of 3D shapes.”

After working in one of London’s most exclusive furniture stores Anna realised there was a real gap in the market for traditional upholstery.

“Upholstery using traditional skills and techniques is very labour intensive which may explain why it is a dying art.”

“But there is something satisfying about restoring a piece of furniture to its former glory although I do like to add a contemporary twist.”

After deciding that she wanted to set up her own business Anna, approached Train 2000 for help

and advice in putting together a business plan.

“I used to lie awake in bed at night wondering if I was doing the right thing but looking back the scariest thing was the anticipation and once I started on the business plan I remained focused.”

Almost 12 months on Anna is now making a name for herself in an area which was once traditionally a man’s domain.

“Running your own business gives you a sense of control and an ability to put your plans into action. I like the way I am carrying on a dying art and with green issues becoming increasingly important I think restoring work is much better than adding to the throwaway society.”

“My aim now is to become known as the best upholsterer in the North.”

www.lockwood-design.co.uk
M: 07981 794 268



Anna Lockwood

Mercury ITC

Every year we read about the unfortunate families who “celebrate” Christmas with a redundancy notice.

It was something that happened to other people until it happened to single mum of three Jane Black at Christmas 1999.

As the family breadwinner with children of seven, 11 and 13 to support there was no time to wallow in self-pity and motivated to support her young family Jane decided to use the skills she had gained working in the IT department at Liverpool Education Authority to start a new business.

Seven years on Mercury ITC, the company Jane, of Wavertree set up with her former co-worker; John Harris now employs seven people .

“I can’t say it was easy. At first we were living hand to mouth and I relied on friends to help me with

childcare but with John’s support we have now achieved a good share of the market providing IT services and equipment for home users and large organisations across Merseyside.

“I remember feeling we had achieved great things when our first order for £1,000 came in. Our last order was for £63,000!”

As for most businesses funding was a key issue in the early days and it was at that point that Jane contacted Train 2000 who helped raise £29,000 from grants and loans.

“I wasn’t aware of the availability of finance for the businesses but in our line of work it was crucial that we had the correct equipment. Train 2000 told me who to apply to and helped me to make the applications.”

Mercury ITC began trading in February 2001 in premises at Brunswick Dock where they

remained until last May when the company moved to Speke.

“Our new offices are fabulous and since moving turnover has doubled. We have been able to take on an additional engineer and have space for training rooms.”

“It was hard in the early days but my daughter is now at university and I have a good work life balance. I don’t have to ask for anyone’s permission for time off for the important events in my family life which is very liberating.

“Of course there is a responsibility in bringing in the work to provide for the salaries for other people which can be quite daunting but I just need to look back on how much we have achieved and then I realise being made redundant was probably the best thing that could have happened.”

www.mercuryitc.com
T: 0151 448 0777



Jane Black

Vanity A forethought

As well as a passion for fashion Ruth has always had a desire to develop her own business and after graduating with a Degree in Design and a Masters in Textiles she was determined to be her own boss.

Having already developed her own exclusive fashion label Ruth came to Train 2000 for business advice and help with putting her business plan together.

"When I completed my Masters, I decided that rather than getting a job and working for some one else, I would have a go at starting my own business, although it is proving to be hard work, I am really enjoying the challenge and it's great to see my fashion-wear in exclusive retail outlets such as The Lounge in Liverpool."

The young designer has also won a prestigious Craft Council scholarship and is currently developing a series of workshops teaching specialised techniques which will tour the UK.

Ruth describes her pieces of work as intriguing and mysterious which entice people to look closer and discover the hidden images and subtle variety of textiles.

"Setting up a business is never easy but with the help and guidance of Train 2000 it helped focus my mind so that I could concentrate on the creative side of my work."

M: 07743 376 505



Ruth Sanderson

Eventa Management

Being her own boss was not something that held much fear for Vici Ladeji who had worked for herself since leaving school.

At a time when most people would consider putting a career on hold Vici, managed to set up one of the country's leading event management companies, Eventa.

"I left school at 15 and trained as a hairdresser before opening my own salon at 19. But when I was 23 I decided I wanted a career change and went down to London to get a job as a runner in the film industry."

Working her way up to become a production manager Vici discovered

her passion for organising events when she took on the role of organising the wrap parties at the end of the production.

Yet six years ago life changed dramatically when she received the sad news that her mother was terminally ill.

"I decided to move back home to Liverpool and take care of my mum which meant finding work up here."

Thanks to her newly acquired skills as a party organiser and the experience and contacts in the film industry Vici set up Eventa Management.

"I first approached Train 2000 when we moved to new premises in

Hope Street and the organisation has been a great source of strength and inspiration since then."

Vici now employs four staff and has an impressive list of clients including the Arts Council, North West Vision, Spencer Holdings PLC, the BBC and the UK Film Council.

"I have exciting plans for the future including growing the business and taking on more staff. I truly believe that everyone has the potential to achieve great things if they put their minds to it and turning those dreams into reality is so rewarding."

www.eventa-management.co.uk
T: 0151 708 8079



Vici Ladeji

HomeCarers (Liverpool) Ltd

According to received wisdom enterprise isn't just about creating new ideas it is about taking old ideas and making them better.

For Karen Caffrey the ability to build on her skills and experience in a growing sector has resulted in a multi-million pound business with over 200 employees.

"I had always wanted my own business but after training as a nurse there didn't seem many opportunities until the changes in Care in the Community emerged."

After completing extra studies to enhance her Enrolled Nurse status into a Registered General Nurse and with two young children to care for, Karen re-thought her career.

"I took a temporary post as the Matron at a nursing home and

saw first hand the difficulty in filling beds."

After working for an agency to deliver the care at home Karen decided she could offer a better service herself and in 1994 with two daughters aged four and eight she began work on Homecarers.

"It was a huge struggle. I took a part-time job as a practice nurse while my husband who had been made redundant looked after the administration."

In the early days Homecarers employed just four staff but now thanks to a steady growth the company employs over 200.

"Although the business was doing well I felt as though we were minuscule in the Social Services sector and I approached Train

2000 for advice on putting together contracts and tenders."

The rewards of investing her time in this area resulted in the winning of a major contract from Liverpool City Council when the company went from providing care for 1,000 homes to 2,000 overnight.

"Train 2000 was a real inspiration to us and we now provide 5,500 hours of care very week for 440 individuals across Liverpool and Knowsley."

"I have always felt very strongly that if a job is worth doing it is worth doing well and I have been quite vocal in stamping out bad practice and maintaining good standards. Our aim now is to maintain our growth and maintain the highest standards of care."

T: 0151 737 2820



Karen Caffrey

A-Gender

Karla Murray loved her job as a painter and decorator but there was a nagging desire to own her own business.

The only thing stopping Karla was "a house and a big mortgage."

Yet the urge to be her own boss just wouldn't go away and after meeting with a business adviser at Train 2000 Karla decided to take the plunge.

"It was the best decision I ever made. No sooner had I left Train 2000 offices than I got my first

contract and the work just hasn't stopped."

Karla, who lives in Aigburth started her career as a painter and decorator at a local firm before setting up A-Gender in 2005.

"It was when I moved into the area of sorting out contracts for the firm I realised I could do this myself."

Now thanks to word of mouth and local advertising Karla is in high demand.

"The work I do now is mainly residential but I get contracts with local developers too."

"I don't find being a woman in what was traditionally a man's world a problem in fact it probably helps as a lot of women feel more secure having me around."

"Being my own boss has helped me grow in confidence."

"My biggest fear was that I wouldn't have enough work and there wouldn't be a wage at the end of the month. But that hasn't happened and with the help and guidance of Train 2000 I haven't looked back."

M: 07891 234 955



Karla Murray

Changing Places

A passion for interiors and a desire to be their own bosses and work around their growing families was the initial inspiration for one of Merseyside's most successful creative property companies.

"We are lifelong friends who met at junior school and as our friendship grew so did our passion for interior design," says Karen, a mother of two from Allerton.

Five years ago Karen, a former bank worker, and Donna who worked for Liverpool City Council decided the time was right for a career change.

"We read about Train 2000 in a local paper and decided to contact them. We haven't looked back since," Karen adds.

Although they were urged on by family and friends who recognised their talent for decorating, they decided to complete an Interior Design course before launching their business in April 2003.

In the past four years the pair has seen their hobby transformed into a thriving business securing links with two of the City's most influential Estate Agents, Sutton Kersh and KMC Residential.

"We started off as Home Stagers (similar to the House Doctor) but as the business has grown we would now describe ourselves as Property Stylists providing the full range of interior design services for show homes as well as installing furniture packages for rental properties," says Donna.

At first the women admitted they were terrified at the prospect of owning their own company especially when it came to matters of finance and administration.

"Luckily for us Train 2000 was there and held our hand every step of the way from the initial business idea and our confidence soared. We never felt intimidated as the service was run by women for women and was so supportive" explained Karen.

"Now we feel confident and proud of everything we have achieved and feel we can finally call ourselves businesswomen," Karen adds.

www.changingplaces.uk.com
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