



careers advice pack

15. Working for yourself



careers advice pack

Working for yourself

Working for yourself could be your solution to finding the perfect work-life balance. It could enable you to do work you enjoy, for the hours you want, in a location that doesn't involve time wasted travelling.

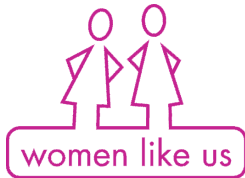
In this Advice Pack we'll look at the pros and cons of working for yourself, consider what skills you'll need, think about different ways you can work for yourself, and look at business planning. There's also a list of useful resources at the end of the guide.

Pros and cons

Flexible hours and the freedom of being your own boss are the main attractions of working for yourself for many women. Against that you need to weigh up uncertainty of income, at least in the start-up phase. How comfortable are you with not being able to depend on a regular monthly income?

Starting your own business can be a lot of work and although you'll be able to organise your own schedule so that you can pick up your kids from school, you might still need to have some childcare in place. You could also find yourself working late into the night to finish something for an early morning deadline.

On the next page, you'll find a few more pros and cons to think about...



careers advice pack

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're in control, directing your business your way • You can create your own working environment • Less stress (that is, once you're set up and in control) • You can manage your time to get the flexibility you need • You set the goals for success • You decide the amount of income you aim to earn • You can work with others to take care of the tasks that are tedious or beyond your skill set • It's prestigious to own a successful business • You gain business knowledge and experience that you can use for the rest of your life • You bring your passion to work • You have more freedom • You have the ability to contribute and create • Financial gain • Resources exist to support you with business advice (often free) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there's a problem, it's your task to resolve it • Success takes time to build • Income levels will fluctuate • You may have to put in a lot of time to get started/solve problems • There's pressure to deliver to your customers • You will need to invest money • You don't get paid directly for 'overtime' • You need to be adaptable to change • It can be hard to 'switch off' • Stress may affect your relationships • There are no guarantees that your business will succeed • You may take on debt or give guarantees to support the business • You may feel isolated or alone • There may be times when you feel like giving up • No sick pay or employer benefits • External factors (eg a customer going bust) can have a serious impact on your success



careers advice pack

Skills and experience

You will be at the heart of any business that you run. Strategy setter, marketing department, finance, IT support, production line and customer help desk – at least to start with it's likely you'll be responsible for all of these.

Remember that being responsible for them doesn't mean you have to do all of them. Get help to cover any skills gaps (no one has it all) and make any money you earn work hard for your business by re-investing.

Have a go at our 'Circle of Success' Coffee Break Exercise (provided separately on the Women Like Us website) and think about what you can bring to your business and where you might need help.

Different ways of working for yourself

There are lots of ways that you can work for yourself and not all of them involve having to come up with an idea for a new product or service.

You could:

Buy a franchise

This will involve an initial monetary investment by you but will give you a recognised brand, a ready-made customer base and ongoing support in the form of training for example. Before you invest, get advice - take a look at the British Franchise Association website:

www.thebfa.org/

Try your hand at direct selling

Direct selling has had something of a bad press in the past but there are good products out there and it really works for some people. Again, take advice before you start – take a look at the Direct Selling Association website: www.dsa.org.uk/



careers advice pack

Go independent (A.K.A freelance/consultant/private practice)

For many women choosing to use their existing skills and experience, working freelance is a solution to the problem of finding the work-life balance they need. Many industry sectors have freelance associations that can give you advice. It also really helps to get advice and support from someone you know who is already working in this way. Don't underestimate the time you will need to spend marketing your business and completing administrative tasks like record keeping, invoicing and filing tax returns.

Legal set up

You have choices to make about the legal status of working for yourself. In simple terms these are:

- Sole trader
- Partnership
- Limited Company

The legal status that's right for you will depend on a number of factors including the nature of your business activity, whether you wish to work with others and/or employ people.

Download the following guide from the HMRC: www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup/working-yourself.pdf

This guide will also explain how to register for tax and national insurance and give you advice on record keeping.

Generating business ideas

So what's your business idea? There are lots of ways to generate ideas - the internet is full of sites giving suggestions on this topic, and there are also lots of books on the subject (see our resources guide). One simple way is to think about the '4 Bs' of business ideas for inspiration:

- **Buy** into an existing idea - franchise, direct sales
- **Borrow** - what works elsewhere that isn't being done in your area?



careers advice pack

- **Bring solution** - what do you know/believe people need that is not being provided in the current market?
- **Better** - what can you do better than current providers? What does better mean, eg quality, price, efficiency?

Jot down your ideas in our Coffee Break Exercise on Generating Business Ideas, provided separately on the Women Like Us website.

Business planning

A trip to the supermarket is more effective if you write a list, and a holiday goes more smoothly if you have an itinerary. Forward planning is useful in business too. Business planning might sound complicated but really it's just thinking about the future and writing your thoughts down in some way.

There's no right or wrong way to business planning. What's needed depends partly on your nature and partly on what you need the plan for. If you need to find funding, for example, then your plan will need to be quite formal.

There's no need to feel daunted and there is a lot of help around - see our resources guide at the end of this Advice Pack. It all comes down to some key questions and common sense. Business planning can take a bit of time though, so we haven't got a coffee break exercise for this - it could take more than one coffee to get right! What we have got is a template you can download - called 'Business Plan Framework', available separately on the Women Like Us website. But to get started, see if you can answer some of the following questions:

- Who are your customers?
- What are you offering them?
- What are your unique selling points (how are you different to other similar businesses)?
- How will you market/sell?
- What will you charge?
- What will your costs be?



careers advice pack

- Who else will be involved?
- What standards (e.g. health and safety) do you need to comply with?
- How will you protect your ideas?
- How fast will your business grow?
- What support do you have?

Download our 'Business Plan Framework' for more detail.

Wise words

A few quotes from other successful women:

" I started The Body Shop in 1976 simply to create a livelihood for myself and my two daughters.... I had no training or experience and my only business acumen was Gordon's (*her husband*) advice to take sales of £300 a week. Nobody talks about entrepreneurship as survival, but that's exactly what it is and what nurtures creative thinking. Running that first shop taught me business is not financial science; it's about trading: buying and selling."

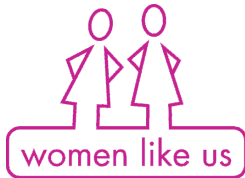
Anita Roddick

"What's the worst that could happen? Everyone turned me down; big deal."

J. K. Rowling

"How do you balance growing the business with raising a family? You just do. I had a business, a lot of orders, and a baby howling for supper. You balance it. You give your baby supper first and then get your orders in. I have worked on more holidays... but what are you going to do?"

Lillian Vernon



careers advice pack

Useful resources

Business start-up advice

All of these provide information for every aspect of your business start-up, from ideas to legal structure and trading:

- www.businessinyou.bis.gov.uk
- <http://www.startupbritain.org>
- British Library Business and IP Centre <http://www.bl.uk/bipc/index.html>

Market research

- City Business Library
http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/LGNL_Services/Leisure_and_culture/Libraries/City_of_London_libraries/cbl.htm

Putting together your business plan

- www.businessinyou.bis.gov.uk
- The Sunday Times book 'Starting a Successful Business' by Michael Morris
- The 'Which?' Guide to Starting Your Own Business: How to Make a Success of Going it Alone ('Which?' Consumer Guides)

Marketing

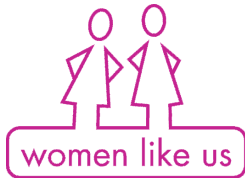
- 'Powerful Marketing On A Shoestring Budget: For Small Businesses' by Dee Blick
- 'Social Media Marketing All-in-One For Dummies' by Jan Zimmerman

Tax and National Insurance

- Download the HMRC pdf on the first steps of working for yourself:
www.hmrc.gov.uk/startup/working-yourself.pdf

Banking and Finance

- The retail banks offer services and advice. Try their websites first – several of them have helpful online guides.



careers advice pack

Tax credits and benefits

- Information on New Enterprise Allowance scheme at: <https://www.gov.uk/moving-from-benefits-to-work/starting-your-own-business>
- Basic information on self-employed income and eligibility for tax credits at: <https://www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit/eligibility>

Representation for people working for themselves

- Federation of Small Businesses <http://www.fsb.org.uk/>
- PCG – freelancers organisation <http://www.pcg.org.uk>

Business regulation

- Trading standards <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/advice/advice-business.cfm>
- Health and Safety <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

Networks for women in business

- Everywoman <http://www.everywoman.com/>
- <http://www.bhive.co/>

Mentoring

- <http://www.mentorsme.co.uk/>

Franchising

- British Franchise Association www.thebfa.org/
- Direct Selling www.dsa.org.uk/

Other

The Citizens Advice Bureau has a useful self-employment checklist at:

- http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/work_e/work_self-employed_or_looking_for_work_e/self-employment_checklist.htm