

Marcia Savage

Back in 2002, I set up as a sole trader providing accountancy services to small and medium size businesses.

The idea behind my business was to use my skills by specializing in services for business startups and people working from home who weren't ready to take on a commercial property and incur overhead expenses.

I also worked with people already in business that had been trading less than three years. The services I provided included, business startup support, business planning, cash flow forecasts, business management, time management, promotion, advertising and book keeping including year end accounts. Everything a new business needed.

I went that extra mile with my clients to show them how to implement processes.

For the first year, getting clients was very difficult. As a professional person, your work is based on recommendations. People have to get to know you, which in itself takes time.



Driven
By
Passion

The most amazing thing for me was finding out that my service was really needed.

I acquired office space in the first year. I found that the information available during the early stages of my business was not very honest.

People do not really tell you about the pitfalls, the ups and downs about working for yourself, that you need wads of money behind you because when you start up you won't get sales immediately. It takes time to create and develop relationships and business contacts that people can recommend. The work is gained based on evidence of what you have done.

I wanted to provide hands on support, because what my clients were going through was the very thing that I had experienced myself.

“People do not really tell you about all the pitfalls”

As a professional person going into business for myself and not having any financial backing, there wasn't any help out there, specifically financial support. Everyone expected me to have money; therefore it was three times as hard as I had very little money. I had used up all the capital I had.

It's easy to underestimate the time it takes to get customers and sales coming in. For the first 12 months I struggled financially, and personally, it took a toll on me.

I had to close down the business after the first year, - as there wasn't enough money coming in.

I didn't stop there though I carried on from home to see what I could do.

I got involved with community organizations and all that was happening locally. This way I could raise people awareness. It gave me lots of contacts but what I really needed were customers.

Everywhere I went there was excitement about working with a women accountant because I was breaking the stereotype of that profession. But I couldn't keep going without the work.

“I stuck with what worked for me and kept on improving it”

»» What was your Turning Point?

It has always been my ambition to work for myself. I kept this goal in view whilst working for other people, developing my skills and abilities.

After graduation, going into the accountancy profession I got to a stage where working for myself was the next step. I wanted to take my life to the next level and that in itself was an inspiration.

“Speaking to someone who can relate to you gives you the strength to move forward”

I come from a family where lots of my relatives had businesses in the past, so it wasn't new for me to want to go down that road. To me this was second nature. How far I would take it, only time would tell. Once I had decided to take that step, it was knowing where to begin.

At first I lived in London. I relocated to Birmingham about some years ago. That was the time I reflected on starting again. The kids were at university. This was my time. I saw the opening and jumped at the chance.

»» What has been your Driving Force?

Personal ambition and people I have met along the way, who have connected with me and I have connected with them. They have been an inspiration to me. When I talk to them, their stories are very similar to mine.

I realized there were genuine people out there who were able to share their stories and be honest about their experiences in business. A lot of people I spoke to in the early part of setting up didn't tell me about the pitfalls. It was all glamour and glory.

I had to go out there and find the real deal. Nobody really tells you about how hard it's going to be. To keep going even when you can't see that you will get enough sales or a deal from what you are doing.

There came a time when I was looking for part time work to supplement my income because that's how tough it was.

“I realized there were genuine people out there”

But having people around me who were genuinely interested and inspiring telling me not to give up and keep going and you will get a break through - and I did.

From where I am today, I would encourage people who are genuinely interested in setting up their own business to do so because if you are ambitious then there nothing more satisfying and rewarding than working for yourself.

It's not a 9 to 5 job, its 7 days a week 24 hours a day. In the first year I didn't have a social life outside my business. It was business all the way. You go to bed and lie there thinking about what you haven't done today and what you can do tomorrow.

It was a transformation period for me. I was learning as I was going along. I was learning something new everyday. I was finding my way around and putting in place what was best for me, what works for me and getting ideas from other people and what they had tried.

“there is nothing more satisfying and rewarding”

I stuck with what worked for me and kept on improving it, all the time.

Unfortunately, it got to a point where the workload was quite heavy and I became very ill from the worry and I had to really pause for a while.

That never stopped me, I'm ready again to move on and carry forward what I started years ago.

➤ What was your Greatest challenge?

Keeping it all going, despite all the pitfalls, just keeps it going and finding the motivation, discipline and inspiration, that's been the hardest thing of all. Sometimes you reflect back and think that's really tough.

Tomorrow you will wake up and think that was yesterday, today you feel little bit better. Just speaking to someone who can relate to you gives you the strength to move forward.

“Throughout the whole time, the vision was growing”

I was never stuck in that mode for too long a period. Time will come when I can employ people who can share the workload.

Throughout the whole time, the vision was growing and it was inspiring, combined with the support of various people - all really helped.

At an early stage I felt isolated because I couldn't find another women accountant. When I did, she told me she couldn't eat because it was really tough, she had to switch businesses. I wouldn't give up because if there's a barrier here for me then I have to break through it.

“I was able to talk to people... to share differences. That helped with the isolation”

➤ How did you overcome the isolation?

Overcoming isolation was hard. I made connections in the beginning with community organizations, which were focusing on setting up and running their business, which helped me to make contacts with people who were in a similar position to me.

I was able to talk to people who were in early stages of running a business.

To share differences. That helped with the isolation.

“Get feedback and pick out what is good for you. What's rubbish leave it on the side”

The social aspect of things changed for me. My long term friends and I were on different levels. I had a business to run and my values changed. That made it a little bit more isolating. My business colleagues were becoming my friends.

➤ Words of Wisdom

If it is a desire, as a woman it has to be a desire that you want to go into business, even if it is from a kitchen table, do it!

Be inspired by it. The help will come. You will meet people. Talk to as many people as possible. Get feedback and pick out what is good for you. What's rubbish leave it on the side.

At the end of the day, your desire is the strongest thing you have. It has to be a desire that you want to do it.

“To me, you never fail at anything”

These will be my encouraging words to anyone who really has the desire and passion to go into business. Just try it because if you don't you'll never know whether you are going to be a success or a failure.

To me you never fail at anything, you might make a mistake but you will grow from that. It's something you have tried and it didn't work. You learn from that and try something else.

Life is a journey you go through changes, challenges, ups and downs.