

The sky's the limit

Have you ever wondered how some women seem to find the perfect career? Wonder no more. Four high-flying women spill the secrets to their success and dish out some valuable advice.

It's a feeling that many of us will have experienced – dissatisfaction with our jobs, being stuck in a rut and wishing we could be doing something that we truly loved.

We all have talents and dreams that often remain unused or unfulfilled, held back by the security of a comfort-blanket job and fear of the unknown. But what if we took the plunge and did something about it? Meet four go-getting women who have done just this. Making their dreams a reality, they have set up businesses, won awards and risen to the challenge of taking control of their working lives.

Dawn Mellowship asks how they bit the bullet and achieved their inspirational status.

'I just really enjoy what I am doing and I think people can sense that'

ROOTS: I went to college, got my qualifications, then headed to Asia for a year and trained one-to-one with a Chinese guy on massage therapies. On my return I worked in a salon in Scotland then went freelance, doing treatments for Aberdeen footballers' wives. I moved to London and was headhunted by Premier, my agent. While doing advertising campaigns for my agent I met actresses, actors, models and celebrities and started working with them as a therapist doing facials and lymphatic drainage. I was also doing editorials and ad campaigns.

SUCCESS: I have been doing it for 20 years so obviously experience helps. I have a professional manner and I am discreet. I refresh myself constantly so I am always aware of what treatments are new on the market and how skincare has changed in the last 20 years.

LUCK OR AMBITION: I think luck had a lot to do with it, being at the right place at the right time, and having an agent had a huge impact on where my career was going to go. However, to maintain a client base you need to have a level of professionalism and know exactly what you are doing. Ambition never really came into it, I just really enjoy what I am doing and I think people can sense that. If they are happy and comfortable with you, then word of mouth is a huge thing.

THE DREAM: I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I left school. I always liked doing make-up and hair, so I suppose it was a natural progression for me. I was very interested in biology and anatomy, and the more you know about the structure of the skin, body and bones the easier it is to do your job as a therapist.





ADVICE: You need to get decent education skills behind you, keep well informed about what is going on and keep your techniques and manner as professional as possible. You have to really enjoy what you are doing because the contact you have with people is so close. A huge element of trust is involved in the relationship between therapist and client.

FUTURE: I am looking to have a base in London, working alongside clinics that deal with cosmetic enhancements, where I can look after clients' skincare pre- and post-treatment. People often don't realise that they need to look after their skin on a daily basis.

For more info, see www.nicholajoss.com

Beauty industry veteran, Nichola Joss, 39, offers bespoke treatments using L'Occitane products. Most famous for her lymphatic drainage massage and fabulous facials, her A-list clients include Scarlett Johansson, Keira Knightley, Charlize Theron, Liz Hurley and Kate Moss.



Photo Johnny Ring

'I feel like the sky's the limit, embrace your goals and see what is possible'

I quit my job, handed the book in two months later and it took them a year to produce it. After reading all about Fairtrade I then wrote another book. I couldn't believe that there were people out there who had worked so hard and were getting nothing back, so I put a book together collecting recipes from chefs and celebrities and all the proceeds went to Fairtrade.

After that I wrote a letter to Sir Terry Leahy (Tesco's chief executive) and told him I thought good-quality home-style Indian food should be available to everyone. A week later I had a call from the head of chilled foods at Tesco. After six months working with the development team, the range launched in April of last year.

SUCCESS: My mentality has always been 'what if?' The only thing somebody can do is say to you 'no', which is not a big deal. Maybe the whole thing about

entrepreneurial spirit is feeling like there are no restrictions around you. People get afraid and think, 'yeah, but there are all these things that can go wrong'. I just feel like the sky's the limit. Why not embrace your goals and see what's possible?

LUCK OR AMBITION: A lot of it is luck, but if you put yourself in the right place at the right time, then you allow luck and fate to happen. I just put myself out there. If I had failed at least I did try. Many people get to their later years and are filled with a deep sense of regret because they haven't fulfilled their dreams. I never want to get to that point and wonder what could have happened.

THE DREAM: When I was growing up there was never anything that I wanted to be, apart from this phase where I wanted to be an FBI officer. It has left me open to doing everything I want to do. I

ROOTS: I was working in advertising when I graduated from university in 2000. I had an idea for a cookbook with all the main Indian dishes that we eat at home but you don't get in restaurants. I wrote a short letter and sent it off to loads of publishers on a Friday, and by the following Tuesday I had emails from four top publishers. Shortly after that I got a book deal with one of them.

Vicky Bhogal, 28, is an author, campaigner, businesswoman and entrepreneur. Her critically acclaimed Indian cookery books, Fairtrade book *A Fair Feast* and award-winning *Just Like Mumji* meal range for Tesco's are just the tip of the iceberg.



'My first clients came through friends of friends'

ROOTS: The idea was formulated when I was planning my own wedding with my partner. We found that we were wasting so much time going to venues that looked fabulous in the brochure but weren't right when we got there.

I thought to myself, imagine if somebody could come to me and say: 'Here's seven venues. All of them fit your criteria, so go and have a look at them and let me know what you think.' Then this person would then just take me to the right people who could plan the whole thing for me.

After we got married it took me eight months to put together my team. I stood outside bridal fairs with a questionnaire for couples asking: 'What are you finding difficult? How much would you be prepared to spend to have someone take this away from you?'

After that I decided this could be a viable business and eight months from then I started advertising.

SUCCESS: Like any business you struggle at the beginning. I started advertising in bridal magazines but it was months before I got any phone calls. People really didn't know what it was, and I think they had a preconceived idea from movies such as *Father of the Bride* that someone would take over their entire wedding and spend all their money. But it's actually about saving people money.

My first clients came through friends of friends or my old work, and gradually

I started getting cold clients. It was one or two years before it was well and truly off the ground.

LUCK OR AMBITION: It was mainly ambition and hard work. I was lucky in that I did get quite a bit of press from the outset and got on the *Lorraine Kelly Show*, but obviously I had to contact them and write a good press release that got their attention.

THE DREAM: It wasn't always my dream to be a wedding planner. I was going to be a choreographer and then an accident put paid to that. After studying beauty therapy in South Africa, I realised that it wasn't for me and got a job with a cosmetic company that distributed equipment, planning their launches.

ADVICE: You can't really go to college and learn to be a wedding planner. If you

GMTV's resident wedding expert and a columnist for top bridal magazines, Siobhán Craven, 38, has been a wedding planner since 1996 with clients including celebrities such as Joan Collins.

don't just want to do one thing and stick with that for the rest of my life.

ADVICE: If you don't know how to do something, ask. People in the top of their profession often feel like they want to give something back, help somebody else and pass that knowledge on. Identify what it is that you want. Why do you want to do it? See where that motivation comes from and what you will and won't compromise on. Do your research. You have to be able to sum up your idea in one sentence because people have such short attention spans. There must be a need for it. Put the hard work in and don't listen to people who tell you 'it will never work'. Be practical and realistic but if you still believe in it just keep going until you make it happen.

FUTURE: Studying is really important to me. I want to do a Masters and Phd. I am due to start filming two television series in the next few months. Creatively, I would also love to write a novel and I am interested in films. I'd love to also open a restaurant chain that is available to everyone. At some point I want to get married as well!

can do an apprenticeship of some kind, whether it's work experience, working for a catering company or a big hotel that caters for weddings, you'll get to know what's involved in planning a wedding and establish contacts within the industry. Great contacts are vital.

Second to that it's your ideas, creativity and organisation skills. I think people have this misconception that it's a very glamorous job. There are glamorous aspects but it's also really hard work. You need to be dedicated and have a business plan to decide if it's viable for you.

FUTURE: Two years ago I made a DVD on planning the perfect wedding and it is now on national distribution and I get to do quite a bit of TV. Probably at some point soon I should write a book!

For more information, see www.scrweddingplanner.co.uk

'The passion our customers have for what we do is tangible – and that is worth more than anything'

ROOTS: It was the idea of my business partner, Kim Buckland, to bring together the research from my beauty books with her marketing expertise. She saw a gap in the market for simple, effective skincare based on high levels of botanicals that really work.

We came together to create affordable luxury in everyday skin treats that actually do what they promise. Prior to that I'd spent ten years researching and writing health and beauty books, and presenting television programmes based on beauty and wellbeing.

SUCCESS: It's vital to know your subject inside-out and I think my specialist knowledge on skincare – what works and what doesn't – was fundamental. You can have great ideas, but they won't work without great products or fantastic service.

Our company motto is Quality, Service and Communication Always. Achieving all three is the key to our customer loyalty and success.

We receive literally thousands of heart-warming calls, letters and emails saying that Naturally Active Skincare has changed their skin for the better and they've never been happier with it. The passion our customers have for what we do is tangible – and that is worth more than anything.

LUCK OR AMBITION: Of course luck helps, but great businesses are based on much more.

In the early years, Kim and I worked every waking hour (and often beyond) to realise our dream of building a successful brand, so I think luck must be more than matched with the stress of hard graft. I've yet to meet a successful entrepreneur who hasn't had to put in the hours.

THE DREAM: It wasn't always my dream to do this, although I've always been self-employed, either as a writer or a broadcaster, so was never into climbing the corporate ladder. With hindsight, it was probably a natural progression.

ADVICE: First, fully research your subject. Then, always back up whatever you do with great service. Increasingly,



Liz Earle, 43, is the founder of the award-winning Liz Earle Naturally Active Skincare range. Her products have earned accolades such as *Vogue's* Midas Touch products of the century.

this is the biggest point of difference in a world so full of choice. Put yourself in your customer's shoes and treat her as you'd like to be treated yourself. We chase customer satisfaction, not profit. If you achieve the former, the latter will follow.

FUTURE: We've just started to fly the flag abroad, having launched in America, Australia and Germany this year. Our next stop is Japan.

For more info, see www.lizearle.com **tonic**