

Case study

Yvonne Lee



A dramatic career change has led Yvonne Lee to follow a long-held ambition to make a business out of her natural artistic talent.

A former accountant, Yvonne set herself up as a freelance illustrator and designer in 2006, working from a studio at her Tolpuddle home. Since then, her portfolio has expanded and she is ready to move to bigger premises.

Working from home on her own presented challenges, but with help from Business Link adviser Val Potheary she has been able to build a business in a previously unknown market and establish a new network of contacts.

Yvonne's clients include the National Trust, Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, musician Seth Lakeman, EMI Records and Paediatric Nursing Magazine.

BUSINESS ISSUES

Yvonne has proved she has the talent to create designs and illustrations, but she also recognised she needed additional support to make her business a success.

Working from home can be isolating and Yvonne found Business Link's one-to-one support invaluable.

Business Link advisor Val Potheary has been working with Yvonne for a couple of years, helping her set clear goals, including targets for achieving new commissions.

Yvonne said: "My problem was I was too busy dealing with the commissions I had and wasn't making time to plan ahead to ensure regular work. That was causing peaks and troughs in my workload and when one commission ended, I had to start all over again, trying to find the next one."

BUSINESS LINK SUPPORT

Yvonne forged a strong relationship with Business Link adviser Val Potheary through the Business Advisory Service. Val has acted as a sounding board and provided ongoing advice and support.

They worked together to develop a business strategy, setting targets which centred on identifying and winning new commissions which would enable the business to grow and prosper.

Yvonne said: "Val has been an enormous help. She worked with me to develop a strategy for the business and put practical steps in place to help the business expand. She also identified networking events and opportunities which have brought me into contact with potential clients and other useful business contacts.

"Knowing that Val is at the end of the phone or email is important to me, especially as I work on

my own. Working with her has helped me see marketing and business development in a new way and has helped me keep a constant eye out for new business opportunities."

Val introduced Yvonne to Dorset Rural Business Network, which brings local companies together to discuss best practice in business. It also provides valuable networking opportunities.

Val said: "It is always a challenge to break into a new market but by helping Yvonne analyse her business and identify clear ways of establishing contacts and winning work, she's been able to take her business to a new level.

"Yvonne's extremely good at what she does, but also has natural business acumen and is ambitious. After just two years, her portfolio is expanding rapidly and she's in a position to think about a move to new premises."

EVALUATING SUCCESS

The past 12 months have been busy for Yvonne and her revenue has increased by 20 per cent.

Her work has appeared in exhibitions including at the Mall Galleries in London and she was a finalist in the Computer Arts Project's New Designer competition.

FUTURE PLANS

Yvonne is hoping to move to the Bournemouth Enterprise Pavilion to continue to win new clients and build her profile. She said: "One of the key things Val has been able to help me with is how to operate as a professional business. I was an accountant in a previous life so I understand the numbers. But Val's help in other areas, such as business development and marketing, has been invaluable."

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