



THE LITTLE BOOK
of AMAZING
BUSINESS STORIES

The hopes, dreams, journeys, struggles and successes
of real businesses in Britain today

Edited by Sue Wybrow

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This book is dedicated to all the passionate, brave and determined people who go for it and follow their dreams -
you rock!

Ooh and to all our families and friends who support and encourage us on our roller coaster rides.

WHY THIS BOOK?

From starting St Albans Business jellies (co-working events) a fair few years ago, to the Facebook group which at the time of writing has over 3,000 businesses in St Albans within it - I've seen a massive difference to many business owners as well as their businesses.

From start ups thinking that they weren't real "business people", to those drinking in tons of information and feeling totally overwhelmed, to people turning their "hobby" into a business - one thing was clear to see - the drive, determination, comradery, support and help these amazing people had and were willing to give each other.

The growth of many of those businesses has been incredible, the difference in those individuals has been amazing, the confidence, strength, belief and passion absolutely incredible.

We want to share these stories with YOU - to share with you that "normal" people can make it happen - that you can follow your dreams and achieve them - whatever they may be.

And my favourite quote of all time "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while you could miss it" - by the fabulous Ferris Bueller! Don't miss life - follow your dreams and go for it!

Sue Wybrow - Chief Legwarmer Wearer - Popdance World

FOREWORD



Home Start

£1 from each sale of this book goes to Home Start Hertfordshire - from a chance conversation at the St Albans Businesses Jelly to say that Home Start had had their funding cut - and St Albans Businesses (SAB) were looking for a local charity to support - a great relationship was formed.

From “Naked” Christmas Cards to a fantastic Justin Timberlake spoof video, SABs have raised thousands of pounds for Home Start.

Suzy Moody explains: Home Start helps give children the best possible start in life by supporting parents as they grow in confidence, build resilience and find ways to manage the challenges they face. We want parents to feel that they are being the best parent they can be.

We know that a nurturing, stable family life teaches our children how to love, how to learn and paves the way to a happy, confident adulthood, but being at breaking point means even the smallest tasks are overwhelming – bedtime stories, making dinner and sometimes, even just getting up each morning!

Home Start volunteers visit families at home each week, supporting parents who are facing challenges such as isolation, bereavement, multiple births, illness, disability or who are just finding parenting a struggle.

They build trusted and non-judgemental relationships and support the individual needs of the family in a way that no other service does.

So thank you for buying this book because it is not just a book; this is you helping Home-Start turn fragile families into strong families, enable vulnerable children to become safe and happy children; you are investing in the future of our community.

www.home-startherts.org.uk

Steve Clarke

Entrepreneur, inspirational speaker, business mentor and specialist in the field of sales and marketing. Author, of “How to thrive... not just survive” and a regular columnist for numerous publications.

It's all about attitude... and action

So here I sit, working on my iPad via the internet on the rooftop terrace of the Kimpton Canary Hotel in Santa Barbara, California fleshing out another simple business plan. To my left, bathed in sunshine, the beautiful backdrop of the majestic Santa Ynes mountains, to my right the glistening Pacific Ocean all set under clear blue skies, I'm wondering; what could possibly go wrong as I'm about to embark upon yet another entrepreneurial journey....

It feels like a far cry from my early business career, working out of a small shop on Victoria Street, St Albans selling office stationery, but is it?

Geographically, hell yes! In practical terms... not in the least bit.

This book is packed with real life stories from real life entrepreneurs. I hope you'll find them inspiring. I hope you can draw useful and practical lessons from each one of them. I also hope you can find the time to pat a few of them on the back and say well done and maybe even offer some encouragement to those just starting out too.

Maybe just maybe, something within these pages will be that catalyst that sets you off on your own exciting roller coaster ride of self-employment!

A good friend of mine, former Olympian turned TV personality and motivational speaker Kriss Akabussi once told me this; role models should not be looked up to, they should be looked into.

It's so true. So as you read each persons' account of their challenges, their successes, their ups and their downs, see if you can see which lessons translate into your world. Look into what makes them tick, what drives them... what's their "why"?

This is what you must lock into if you are to succeed in your own business. You must know your 'why'. You will need to remind yourself on the dark, cold winters morning "why" you're doing this.

You need a bulletproof emotional connection to what you are doing and know "why" failure is not an option... You should be able to visualise the end product and know "why" you have to

Succeed...

From all the business people I've met, there's a common thread woven into the very fabric of every successful "entrepreneur".

Irrespective of the industry or sector, there are just a few things in truth;

Vision, purpose, belief and action.

Be crystal clear on your vision. Where are you going? What are you creating?

Know your purpose. Why are you doing what you are doing... and it's not all about the money.

Create an unshakable belief in yourself, your products or your services.

Finally, once you adopt the right attitude - it's all about action.

My life is set to take yet another twist and turn, such is the life of an entrepreneur. Since my early days of selling office stationery in St Albans, I've tried my hand at many things - not all screaming successes, but I tried. I had a vision, I took action. In hindsight, perhaps on one or two ventures the purpose and belief were missing or not strong enough.

Amongst the twists and turns, I've started a ski business in the USA which I floated on the stock market. Started an IT company in Harlow which I grew to £32m a year before selling that on. For several years I've had a successful career as an international professional speaker and business mentor. In the last couple of months I've just created and launched the worlds' first Bluetooth lapel mic and companion app for use with a smartphone, www.LoveHeyMic.com... and now - I'm about to turn my world upside down once more and move to California as I set up www.advantage.net.

This time I'm going to disrupt the trucking industry with a revolutionary piece of 'clean tech' that reduces fuel consumption by 25% and emissions by 35%... Vision, purpose, belief and action all locked down... wish me luck, I'm going in...

I wish you every success on your journey.

It's all about attitude and action - best of luck.

Steve Clarke

www.eurekaselling.co.uk

www.loveheymic.com

www.advantage.net

CONTENTS

- Why this book?..... i
- Foreword ii
 - HomeStart..... ii
 - Steve Clarke..... iii
- Nicky Weisfeld: Valuing Minds 1
- Danielle Durant: The Cobbled Kitchen..... 6
- Suzy Moody: Home Start Hertfordshire 10
- Deborah Temple: Interior Designer, DST Design..... 15
- Amanda Dilworth: Ruby and Freddie..... 19
- Adarsh Mehta: Let’s Talk Travel – Road to Entrepreneurship... 23
- Nicky Packman: Forever Living..... 26
- Gill Turton: lifeadmin..... 30
- Louise Brennan: Louise’s Antenatal Classes..... 33
- James Sheehan: Macpro Design and Print Ltd. 37
- Christine Frith: Hour Hands..... 41
- Julie Brian: Edie & Rona..... 45
- Ruth Farenga: Mindful Pathway 49
- Liz & Tommy Carey: Total Care Personal Training..... 54
- Aarti Parmar: AP Brand Communications..... 58
- Susan Heaton-Wright: Executive Voice..... 63
- Louise Murphy: Captain Tortue 66
- Sarah Wren: Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS). 70

Jenny Soppet-Smith: Digital Jen.....	75
Matt Dawson: Inspire Music School	79
Debbie Stewart: TimeOut4Me.....	83
June Cory: My Mustard.....	87
Ben Schneider: BLS Computer Solutions	93
Lucy Holliday: Nicola Holliday Foundation.....	95
Jo Hailey: Striking Places Photography	99
Nikki Howes: STEPS.....	103
Cheryl Luzet: Wagada.....	107
Donna Nichol: Chloe James Lifestyle	112
Emma Bustamante: Cositas	116
Sally Shepherd: Eve & Adam Boutique Spa.....	121
Christo Tofalli: Ye Olde Fighting Cocks (reputed to be Britain’s oldest pub).....	125
Kim Bradford: Sphere HR.....	130
David Jenkins: PQA Hemel Hempstead & St Albans Brilliant Theatre Arts and Brilliant Management.....	134
Catherine Batour: Make Up Beauty Fashion.....	139
Neil Barras-Smith: Will Trust & Protect Ltd	144
Sue Wybrow: Popdance	149
Ian and Melanie Wooding-Jones: Redbourn Auto Solutions...	155
Sarah Lomax: Holiday Inn Express St Albans	162
Jenny Ford: Author of inspirational books for adults and children	164
Toula and James Messer: The Sultans of Swag™	168

Monir Ali Photographer: Commercial Photographer, Little Big Ego, Asian Wedding Experience, Portobello Picture Co and Village Workspace.173

Kristina Snarskiene: Bee Divine Beauty Therapist.....176

Clare Suttie: Atlas Translations Ltd178

Marian Murphy: Flourish with Social Media184

Hannah Knight: HK Accountancy Services.....190

Steve Clarke: Eureka Selling & Hey Mic!.....194

Eileen Morrison: Beautiful Bea.....198



Valuing Minds
POSSIBILITIES • PRIORITIES • PERFORMANCE

NICKY WEISFELD

Valuing Minds

I've run a business before – a successful business, a multi-million pound business, a medium sized enterprise employing quite a few people – and with a business partner that I'd known and worked with for years. But this time, it's just me (well, at the moment anyway).

So, if it succeeds or fails, it's down to me. A bit daunting really – no one I can blame if things go wrong. No one I can rely on to bring in work. No one to do the strategy, marketing, sales, paperwork, books, delivery and so on. Just me!

So why on earth would I put myself in this potentially risky position? To start with, it was boredom. Having worked as a psychologist for most of my adult life (both in education and then business) and having sold the company, I took some time out and then did various roles helping friends who had businesses of their own – a touch of change management here, some bookkeeping there and masses of admin. But I could feel my brain atrophying with each load of filing and I was BORED.

I decided to go back to the thing that I had trained for all those years ago, Educational Psychology, as it would require the little grey cells to be working steadily, if not on overtime.

Having been out of the profession for over 20 years (though I had worked as a Business Psychologist for much of that time), I knew I would have to jump through various hoops to regain my registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The hoops amounted to 60 days in a 12-month period, made up of supervised work, attending courses and events, and private study. The last two of these were easy – I booked myself onto courses and workshops. I read heavy tomes on psychology and education that worked better than any pills at sending me to sleep. I met up with former colleagues and picked their brains, relieved to hear that many of the issues and approaches I had used years before were still around, although the acronyms had changed a bit, and multiplied.

But the supervision was a problem. Local Authority Psychologists were already involved in supervising trainees. The private psychologists didn't want to know; maybe they saw me as future competition. In any event, having racked up numerous days and still not found a supervisor, 12 months had passed, so all the stuff I had done at the start began to fall out of the time period.

Eventually, I found a sympathetic ed psych who agreed to supervise me and I started doing work with and for him – for a fee! Fast forward twelve months and I put my forms into the HCPC for re-registration.

Rejection number 1 came because I hadn't read the small print properly: no more than half the 60 days could come from private study. So, I did more supervised work and went on more courses. Bear in mind that all this was costing me, so I was building up expenses even before the business had started. And, as time passed, more things fell outside the start of the crucial 12-month period.

Rejection number 2 in June 2016 was because I was using an old form I had previously downloaded so the registration fee

was wrong. Rather than just ring and ask for the difference, the whole thing was cancelled and sent back.

Rejection number 3 followed in July (something to do with the type of application), but in September, success! I was on my way.

Having worked in local authorities many moons ago, I decided to work independently this time and had several ideas about how I wanted to proceed. I had come up with a business name but found that there was an Australian Ed Psych practice using the same name (though they didn't own the .com domain name). As a matter of courtesy, I sent them an email saying I would be launching in the UK with the name and they threatened me with a lawsuit as they were selling resources globally. Back to square one.

Fortuitously, it was around this time that I went to my first St Albans Businesses (SAB) jelly and had the great fortune to sit at a table with Digital Jen and Cobbled Kitchen Danielle. Within two hours, I had my business name, my domain name and several variants of it were registered and we'd started planning the website. Jenny introduced me to Aarti and that led to my brand design, which I love - and which is totally different to others working in my space.

The business started October 1st and after a frenetic period of setting processes and systems up, purchasing the kit I needed and writing, the website went live in November. One of the things I did early on was join all the relevant associations and databases I could. And two days after the website went live, I had my first client!

Thankfully they keep coming, even with little active marketing. The cases are always interesting, sometimes challenging, and with these and the lecturing work I do, I'm happily in profit each month. I should make a small profit this year despite all the start-up costs and having to take some time out of the business twice this year (one of the perils of working for yourself).

Has it been worth it? Most definitely! Not only am I thinking again, which makes me feel good, but I am getting good feedback and am providing practical help and advice to parents and children about their education. I like feeling in control of what I'm doing – I can accept or turn away cases (as I have done when I felt it was outside my expertise) – and doing as much (or as little) work as I want.

My family have been incredibly supportive and I like the fact that my teenage daughter, who doesn't remember me working in a demanding, professional role all those years ago, has a working mum role model doing something she enjoys.

What advice would I give someone looking to start their own business?

Make sure there's a demand for what you plan to do; I was fortunate enough to have contacts in the industry who could help me understand current demand before I set up shop.

Read the small print – if I had done this with the HCPC stuff, I probably would have started the business considerably earlier.

Be persistent when you come up against challenges – you'll get through them in the end, as I did when trying to find a supervisor.

Don't try to do everything yourself; know what you're good at and where you need help. I'm not a web designer, a brand specialist or an accountant (and lots of other things besides), so I have made use of the SAB network to obtain the services I need – and I'm sure there will be more of this as I go on. It's worth paying for others' expertise not just for peace of mind but also to get things done faster and more skilfully.

Use any free business advice or grants going; I took advantage of the start-up support from STANTA which led to a very useful and thought-provoking strategy session (with a list of action points for me to do) and free workshops on various business topics.

Find a trusted advisor/confidante/mate who you can talk to about your hopes and fears for the business and who can provide a shoulder to cry on/ endless cups of tea/glasses of wine as and when needed and will help you retain a sense of perspective.

Don't neglect your own development; I must have continuing professional development as part of my registration but in any event, I'm keen to stay updated and acquire new skills, and see that as an important part of my personal investment in the business.

Set yourself reasonable goals and GO FOR IT!



NICKY WEISFELD

www.valuingminds.com



DANIELLE DURANT

The Cobbled Kitchen

“It’s now, or never, Danielle.” So said my teaching colleague and dear friend one September day in 2013. We had just been talking about the stresses and strains of secondary school teaching when also trying to run a home and be a mum to two, not always easy, boys.

My last teaching post finished the previous July. It nearly finished me. I had become a serial maternity-cover teacher and had underestimated the toll of working in different schools for just a few months at a time. And the thought of going back after a term’s “break” just filled me with dread.

I’ve always been a creative person, enjoying making things whether it was out of mud and junk as a young child or fabrics, thread or even wood veneer as I got older. And I always knew I’d follow in my dad’s footsteps at some point in my life – relying on my own hands to earn a living. But before that, thanks to a particular teacher of mine in the Sixth Form, I discovered the love of learning and teaching. So I took that route from University onwards and thoroughly enjoyed it for many years. Until 2013.

With fewer opportunities to be creative and produce things in adult life, this outlet was found in cooking. I’m a foodie; I love eating and I love feeding people. My mum and I have often felt fundamentally connected with the cultures and peoples (mainly women) around the world, throughout history at that very moment a pot of homemade food is put on the table and the family dives in. Heaven.

So I was faced with the choice – classroom or kitchen? A chance chat after dropping off the kids one morning with another mum, the incredibly clever Sinead, who I had no idea worked for Ogilvy & Mather and later, Saatchi & Saatchi, felt like the stars had aligned themselves right above me in the sky. She told me to jot my ideas down on the back of an envelope for her. The creative juices started flowing again, excitement at the thought of combining all of my passions into a Name that didn't yet exist or a Logo that no-one had yet seen, was simply irresistible. It wouldn't leave me. A late night chat with Andy, my husband (who's great with words and plays on words, although also thinks this is all you need to make a joke!) revealed that Name. After mentioning to him that when we were kids, my brother and I never knew what was for dinner because our mum made it up as she went along and called it "some concoction" – The Cobbled Kitchen was born.

Through Sinead's brand designer friend, I soon got to see the Logo. Well actually, there were several, but she left the best till last and when I first saw MY aubergine coloured pot with exquisite, varied font lettering like random ingredients, I cried. I actually shed tears and I wanted to show my mum immediately, as she knows what a big pot means.

With Andy supporting me, I could then spend most of 2014 supporting my parents. My father became very ill and my mother and I drove everyday for a month to and from the hospital. Once he was back home, I could spend time trying to cobble together my own website. Well, I couldn't afford to pay someone to do it for me. It soon became very apparent that there is an astonishing amount of talent and expertise standing around in school playgrounds at 9 and 3pm every day up and down the country. Mums, dads, carers and grandparents, who