



Tina, together with some of her clients and fellow business owners

Ladies That Launched

PHOTOGRAPHS CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL TEW

Previously in Mwaah, we discussed the fact that many women are searching for the elusive ground between power woman and caring mum. We explored how to overcome the barriers that typically stand in the way of building a career or even your own business, without betraying family life.

This time round, Chris Humphreys speaks to Business and Executive Coach, Tina Dulieu who has worked personally with many women business owners, helping them develop and grow their businesses whilst managing to be a mother/wife/daughter too. He spent some time with 'Tina's Tornados'- ladies whose businesses are going places and who are an inspiration to us all!



Tina Dulieu photographed by VG Photography.

TINA'S TORNADOS

"In my experience of coaching both men and women business owners," explains Tina, "there are sometimes different pressures within the business between the sexes.

The one that never ceases to amaze me the most is the woman's own expectation, and that of those close to her, that she can/should juggle all of her many roles and still be a successful business woman. Many business women endeavour to effectively manage work, children, husband/partner, parents, relatives/friends, plus running a household and believe that they should be proficient and successful at them all – no mean feat!"

Tina believes it is the fear of the enormity of this task, and **not** their potential to succeed, that holds many women back from running

their own businesses; "the lack of confidence that a 'housewife, mother or employee' can be taken seriously in the 'business world' is one that prevails and the anxiety that those around her will suffer from her 'not being there if needed'. Although there is the strong desire to be entrepreneurial, to do something they enjoy and be master of their own destiny, the lack of business acumen, knowledge and experience to make their ideas profitable is a barrier. It was fine while they were employed and someone else had the ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the business. 'But me?', they think, 'Can I do it? I **know** I have the intelligence, the potential, the fantastic ideas, the passion and I **want** to be financially independent! But..."

Well, ladies, we have good news for you – many women do run successful businesses while being a mother/wife/daughter, in fact Tina has been down that road herself - twice! "For over 10 years I created, ran, grew and developed a successful business with 8 staff and then profitably sold it and know all the ups, downs, ins and outs of employing people,

finding clients and juggling a family." Tina enthuses, "After that I spent time training and then founded Coaching Dynamics. Women have the most wonderful skill of being able to organise, plan, execute and deliver all that is required, they often just need some professional help to be able to compartmentalise roles, to understand the intricacies of business finance, business negotiation, marketing, developing a client base and promoting a saleable service or product.

They need to learn to time manage and delegate effectively to have a good work/life balance (yes, that includes employing a cleaner/ironer, sending your partner off to the supermarket with a list) while you focus on growing and developing the business during chosen working hours, around the family if necessary".

This is where Tina's company, Coaching Dynamics can help in educating, supporting and helping the business grow with both newly started businesses and well-established businesses ready to move to the next level of success.

"The women featured in this article, together with Mwaah's very own gardening guru Pat Fox of Aralia Garden Design and recruitment 'agony aunts' Lucy Gilmour and Wendy Barriball of Recruitability, are some of my fabulous, successful business clients that have helped make my job fascinating and one that I love!" beams Tina. "All have very different businesses but the one thing they have in common is the unwavering determination to succeed in their field by finding solutions to the obstacles and challenges that running businesses present and it is my pleasure to help them do that."

Tina Dulieu founded Coaching Dynamics in 2006, after winning a scholarship to study for a Diploma in Corporate and Executive Coaching and becoming a Coaching Academy Licenced Trainer. From 1983 to 1996 she taught GCSE and A Level mathematics, before launching and successfully building the Ongar Kumon Study Centre from 1996 to 2006.

Tina was nominated for Epping Forest Business Woman of the Year in 1997 and 2002.

Further details about Tina, Coaching Dynamics, client testimonials and the Programmes she offers can be found at www.coachingdynamics.co.uk, or on 01277 362 948.



Alison tasting a wine to sit down with.

VINO, VIDI, VICI!

From childhood, I always wanted to run my own business. Aged 7, I remember getting a kick out of cycling to the top shops to buy sweets with pocket money with the sole intention to sell them on to my family at modest profit when the shops were shut!" laughs Alison Stephens as she recalls her earliest forays into the world of commerce. Given that anecdote, it's probably no surprise that, having gained a degree in European

Business studies with French, Alison spent part of her earlier working life as National Accounts Manager for... Mars Confectionary!

There's no such thing as a shut shop in Alison's world now, as her company Wine2laydown.com (www.wine2laydown.com) is an online wine merchant offering quality affordable wine from everyday drinking through to fine wines to lay down and age.

Alison who lives in Braughing, Hertfordshire with husband and business partner Ben, and two daughters Ella (9) and Florence (6), sites "a passion for wine, years spent in vineyards all over the world, an ambition to run my own company and a solid business plan" as all factors contributing to the birth of Wine2laydown.com in 2007. With online sales continuing to grow month on month and a successful launch of supply to the trade (restaurants, pubs, delis and caterers) behind her earlier this year, Alison reflects on her learnings to date:

"Although it first seemed a bit lonely to lose the structure, back up and formality of a corporate job, I certainly benefited from Business Link's advice as well as the ongoing use of a business coach and local networking groups such as BNI.

"You need to put together a quick and simple cash forecast, as different stages of business growth require different levels of cash but my advice is don't get too bogged down in detail and red tape. You never stop learning. In my case, I love learning about new vineyards, new wines, but also new technology and how the internet and social media is changing".

"Running your own business provides a different quality of life," muses Alison, "ultimately this means longer hours of work, but the hours can fit around your day to day life. If you don't like hard work, don't do it! I do most of the school pickups and then go back to emails in the evenings when the girls are tucked up in bed. The school holidays requires a bit of juggling though! I'm sure that behind every successful business woman there stands an exhausted yet very proud grandmother. I have been very fortunate with childcare from both my mother and my husband's mother".

Alison is a great believer in celebrating all successes: "This could be a new account, sales surpassing £100k, or a business award. When working for yourself, you need these little lifts". And I can vouch that a quick dip into the Wine2laydown.com 'virtual cellar', will always result in just the tippie to toast success!



Louise toasts another sparkling success

EVENTS WITH AN OLIVER 'TWIST'

health and pampering day, Louise is 'hands on' – from creating, marketing and managing the event, to pinning on delegates' lapel badges.

Louise, a self-starter, left school at 17 to Study at Secretarial College where she "learnt how to type on a type-writer with carbon copies - no such things as PC's then!". A course in Business Studies and senior PA roles in the London commercial property sector followed, before she moved out to leafy Berkshire, as General Manager of an Art Gallery and Craft shop.

Her experience in the fields of property and art ensured she had built up some good contacts enabling her to offer an "outsourced typing service" from home, but Louise couldn't resist the urge to organise her clients and offer them more, such as database building, financial support, membership/ subscription services and event management, "the pleasure of doing everything, from sourcing venues to bringing 'team builds' together, focused my energy... the rest, as they say, is history".

"Organising events is the most sociable of jobs" says Louise, "but by nature, it leads to the most unsociable of working hours. Luckily

my husband has got used to my late night admin, accounts and vat sessions!" And with children of 3 and 12, Louise's own 'in-house' events management has to be meticulously planned too. "I would advise anybody starting a business to do it from home as I did for many years – there's no point in taking on unnecessary overheads – but I also think it's important to try and keep family life separate from work whenever possible, which means some ground rules have to be put into place from the start if you're to move towards your work goals".

Within minutes of meeting Louise for the first time, I remember the twinkle in her eye as she gave me a wooden spoon - a novel invite to a cookery event she was organising. The next time, still twinkling, she was marshalling several significant, but noticeably obedient, members of the local business community around at the Harlow Business Exhibition (also organised by SR). Both events would have been celebrated with a glass of champagne – even a dip in the Doll's House pool – for Louise and her team. But you can be pretty sure that it will have been hard earned!

If, on a Summer's day, you were to visit the intriguingly named Doll's House – SR Events' (www.srevents.co.uk) quirky office in the village of Wendens Ambo, near Saffron Walden - you may well find Louise Oliver and her SR team having a quick dip in the outside swimming pool or quaffing a glass of champagne together.

Strike you as a bit 'Ab Fab' sweetie? Then don't be fooled, because although Louise has a great sense of fun, she's a 10-12 hours a day, 6-7 days a week, self-confessed workaholic whose job is to make sure that your private or corporate event has the wow factor. Whether it's a televised awards lunch, a bespoke team building event or an holistic



Michelle enjoying life on top

THE BRINK OF SUCCESS

Consultancy. “Oddly, being only 25 at the time, I didn’t dwell on any potential barriers or fear factors - I was just enthusiastic and optimistic to get started!” she remembers. “We came up with our company name over an Indian meal in Epping, jotting notes on a cigarette packet. It was a naive beginning but from there, we have delighted in building strong relationships with our ever-growing client base, viewing every single client as our ‘best client’, whatever their business size!”

“After just 4 years of trading we were approached by a client, BBI Berns Brett, who told us they liked the way we offered a supportive relationship to them and our other clients with hands-on expert advice around the clock. They bought the HR/ Health and Safety portions of our company to complement their portfolio”.

This proved to be a great opportunity for Michelle who now works with a diverse range of industries from construction to fashion, care homes to parking enforcement with a current emphasis on growing her e-learning product range. “In the excitement of it all, my

tip to others is to truly balance the business side with your social life and personal interests. Weekly I aim to fit in my passion for karate and exercise and spend time with those I love including my beautiful bulldog Mack!” Michelle has also been known to enjoy the occasional meal in Bishop’s Stortford’s American and Mexican eaterie, the ‘Prickly Pear’ owned by her partner, Nicholas Merritt!

“If I knew back then what I know now, I’d have put more structure in place - as we worked 100% of the time IN the business and absolutely not enough time ON it! However, we have been supported by great advice from BBI Group, Tina Dulieu at Coaching Dynamics and my family with their 40 years of experience building a large transport company.

Luck, laughter, focus, hard work, listening to advice and getting the balance between home and business are my strategies and I look forward to growing the business much more in the future too.”

After growing up in London and Bishop’s Stortford, Michelle Brinklow can see the milestones that have brought her to where she is now, enjoying a busy life as a 34 year old director and shareholder of BBI Alternative Solutions (www.alternative-solutions.org.uk).

Vivacious Michelle was just 19 when she went into Human Resources within the motor and IT industries and then in 2002, together with a colleague she started a Health and Safety, Human Resources



Jenny in one of Lilly Pins' Salons

entrepreneurs! But, then again, Jenny Twigg is ‘no ordinary’ hairdresser....

Jenny originally qualified as a hairdresser as a mature student in 1992 and began a mobile business working with the elderly in the community; but it was after a period of time out of the business due to ill health that proved to be her defining moment:

“When I returned to hairdressing at Elmhurst Residential Home in 2001, I was asked to train as a carer - so I underwent Dementia training,” Jenny recounts. “I had never experienced such job satisfaction, the feedback and gratitude I got from the families of my clients was immense, they were absolutely delighted to find out that I was not only caring for their mum/dad but also ‘the lady’ doing their hair. I was then determined to fulfil my dream by combining my two passions, working with this client group and hairdressing”.

Having two such complementary skill sets soon led to a demand for Jenny’s services in other care homes locally, which meant she had reached a crossroads in her professional and family life - with two children of primary school age, did she continue a career in care or take the plunge and start her own dedicated business? One enormous splash later, ‘Care 4 Hair’ set sail.

“I soon took on an assistant- a fellow carer and qualified hairdresser- as I grew busier and my reputation grew. My extensive research into the care industry revealed that being Dementia trained is not a requirement of outside service providers such as hairdressers, beauticians and the like. My mission is that all residential and care homes will have the choice to have their own personal hairdressing and beauty service provided to them by fully trained, qualified staff who not only care how their clients look but also how they feel. That’s also why I expanded my services to offer beauty therapy”. 2009 saw Jenny re-brand and launch her company Lily Pins Ltd. (www.lilypins.co.uk) “It was a very exciting year all round for us. I entered “The Pitch 2009” and was shortlisted from over 100 applicants for the London Regional Final, eventually winning the “wildcard” place to the national final in London”. This £50,000 pitching competition involved Jenny presenting to, and being grilled by, a panel of top class business talent, including former TV Dragon Doug Richard who subsequently invited her to share her experience on stage with him at the launch of his own ‘Perfect Your Pitch’ event.

As if that wasn’t enough Lily Pins were >>

FROM HAIR COMBS TO CARE HOMES

When Harlow-born Jenny Twigg was approached to work in a local care home as ‘the hairdresser’ in 2001, little did she know that 9 years later she would be sharing a stage with one of the most feared ‘Dragons’ from the TV series ‘Dragon’s Den’, retelling her business journey to a live audience whilst also being broadcast worldwide on an online TV channel for

also finalists in 2 categories in The Anglian Business Awards – Entrepreneur of the Year and Start up Business of the Year. 2010 shows no signs of slowing down for the girl who left school at 16, one of five children.

“From April 2009 until now I have engaged the services of Tina Dulieu at Coaching Dynamics and received partial funding from the government initiative ‘Train to Gain’ for a Management and Leadership Programme. Tina’s wisdom and down to earth advice has been a great investment, teaching me to network and introducing me to other great professional services”, Jenny recommends.

Would she do anything different with the wisdom of hindsight? “You know what? I wouldn’t! I believe things happen at certain times for a good reason and that it is all part of our journey, I am happy with where my company is now, I feel the time is right to expand and that I am personally ready for the challenges that lay ahead, I have learnt a lot of lessons along the way and no doubt will continue to learn,” Jenny laughs, determinedly.

“Believe in yourself, go for it, and remember the difference between success and failure is getting out of bed, NOT staying under that duvet, on those occasional mornings when you wonder ‘why? Why am I fighting what feels like a losing battle? To coin one of Tina’s phrases – don’t be a pendulum to your emotions!”

And to catch a Dragon’s phrase - Jenny, let me tell you where I am.... I’m in!

HELP FOR BUSINESS OWNERS VIA GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Over the past 18 months Tina Dulieu has helped more than 30 companies access generous Government Funding to enable them to take up Business Coaching Programmes with Coaching Dynamics to develop and expand their businesses. There are three grants Tina helps clients access, each with differing qualifying criteria – one is for up to £1000, another 70% of the cost up to £3000 and another for £450.

Contact Tina Dulieu directly for eligibility information and she will be glad to offer advice.

THOROUGHLY MODISH MAIDEN

Here’s a riddle for you: Who is best described as a Maiden in Hertford, Modish in Saffron Walden, a Mum in Bishop’s Stortford, but she’s always Decent wherever she goes?

The answer is Toronto-born Sarah Decent, the fabulous owner of Modish – which she describes as ‘a traditional women’s shoe shop, with a few modern twists and a wall of handbags to die for’ – and co-proprietor of women’s boutique Maiden, where exclusive clothing ranges, shoes and boots sit alongside ‘an eclectic mix of vintage collectables and furniture’. (www.modishonline.co.uk) (www.maiden-boutique.co.uk)

Sarah’s business ethos runs through the heart of both shops; a thoughtful, hand picked designer range of quality, affordable fashion, with comfort a priority. Being a size 4 herself (the shoe industry’s standard sample size), Sarah has the advantage of trying on all the ranges of shoes and boots that are presented to her at the trade fairs she visits each buying season – ‘even a 6 inch stiletto can look gorgeous yet retain a high level of comfort for it’s type’, she says.

The value for money factor also dictates Sarah’s choice of preferred shoe and bag designers, such as Tamaris, Caprice, Abro, Manas, Mischa Barton, Yoshi and Audley (the latter two having a British design influence, something that Sarah is proud to promote). “My shops are about not needing to take out a second mortgage to purchase something that looks and feels special. Whatever you may wish to spend, I’m here to help you leave the shop happy”. A case of every shopper, regardless of income, being ‘well-heeled’?!

It was less than 3 years ago that Sarah, who was adopted and grew up in Hitchin from the age of 6, bought Modish, “not only did the previous owner stock lovely brands and have loyal customers, but she also mentored me on the job which was key’.

Sarah identifies her inspiration for her radical career change back to 2004 when she was seconded to Rome as European HR Director for Technicolor. Put a lady with a penchant for shoes and passion for fashion in Rome, and the first seeds of contemplating a career change were sewn! There then followed a spell as HR Director of GSK before she felt she

had finally fallen out of love with HR.

“I had just hit 40, had found a new partner and become a stepmother to two (very lovely and supportive) teenagers and thought ‘just because I love buying shoes doesn’t mean I’ll be a natural shoe retailer... it might be like putting Dracula in charge of a blood bank!’ But as my other dream was to become a drum and bass DJ, I thought my people skills and qualifications – including a degree in Management Sciences - were probably better suited to shops rather than raves!” Modish was only bought after Sarah carefully researched the local market, demographics and margins involved.

A self proclaimed desire to ‘continually learn all I can about my business and how to build it’ has fuelled Sarah’s seamless transition into retail. Her thirst for self development has been supplemented by a business coach (Tina Dulieu), a retail consultant/champion and her membership of many local networking and wider entrepreneurial support groups. As a result, turnover has doubled since she bought Modish, has allowed her to invest in Maiden and to target a third shop opening in 2011. Her commitment to the local business community, ‘vital in forming meaningful relationships with other business owners’, was also illustrated by the recent launch of the Saffron Walden Loyalty Card, a customer reward card which has built up a base of around 1200 card holders and 50+ complying businesses in and around the town that offer incentives and discounts to card holders. Sarah led the Working Party responsible for its innovative introduction (why not sign up at www.saffronwaldenloyalty.co.uk)

On the shop floor with Sarah, I witnessed a steady flow of women through the doors of differing ages, shapes, sizes and backgrounds. What they all had in common (apart from the love of shoes and bags built into their DNA) is that they all stayed for a chat and some well received advice, and they all left with a purchase in their bags and a spring in their step. Comfort shopping, Decent style. 



Comfort shopping, Decent style.

