

2004



At four months pregnant with my second child, I was made redundant from the company I was working for – they said they had to make cut backs although no one else was being made redundant in any other department and I was a senior designer in my department. I had to leave straight away. When I got home, first shock then depression set in. My thoughts were twofold, what were we going to do financially? And is my career over? My husband got home and was thrilled by the news. Together we began to see the

positives – I could be at home with the children, no more horrid commute, no more 8am to 6pm nursery days for our toddler, and no more stifling working environment where people didn't think I had a brain because I was pregnant. I began to work out a plan to start my own web design business. I had already done a few freelance jobs, but this had to be an actual business – not just favours for friends of friends.

It was slow and frustrating at first. How do I get clients? How do I market myself? How do I keep the books? I began with what I knew. My toddler's private day nursery lacked a good website and internet presence. I set up a meeting with the owner and flogged my services and design expertise. She went for it and so with my first project underway I began to feel more confident and did my best to make this starting point the success launch I so badly needed.

One of the scariest aspects of starting out on my own was the financial side of the business. Our income had been halved and I was about to have a baby. Everything I earned from my first project had to be used to advertise and market myself. I feared never-ending debt and an uphill struggle. Well, we did go into debt but not massively and it was only an uphill struggle for the first 6 months or so after our baby was born. The business side of things is still a hit or miss mystery to me but I am better at managing it and feel much more confident in dealing with clients and the financial side of things. Now my client base is strong and constantly growing. I am sometimes still full of self-doubt but I overcome this through my need to survive and the joy I glean from what I do, creatively, and what I accomplish professionally.

A more emotional struggle and frustration of mine was that I didn't have any friends and we didn't know anyone here or have any family nearby. We had moved to Nottingham from Tokyo so that I could study for my MA in Design at the Trent University. I got a job in Grantham straight after I got my MA and my husband worked in Mansfield. We didn't know anyone at all! And, being American, I had no history here and no 'old' friends or family to lean upon for

friendship and support. Since I was at home all the time I felt isolated. I started going to a baby & toddler group that I eventually became Chair of. The friends I made at this group are now some of the closest friends I've ever had. Shortly after I joined this group, I began to realise practical parenting eluded me. Music groups, toddler times, birthday parties, parks, days out – all this information seemed unattainable, only accessible by eavesdropping on conversations of more experienced parents. I discovered other new parents had the same problem. The lack of this type of information inspired me to use my skills as a web designer to create an information portal for parents of young children. This is how Better Days Out was born, my website for activities for children in Nottingham and the East Midlands. I am constantly adding to this website, inspired by the continual positive feedback and gratitude I get for creating it and maintaining it.

I run Better Days Out alongside White Ochre, my design business, and they compliment each other nicely. I feel very proud to have built both 'enterprises' from nothing but the word go and am very thankful to my family and friends who offer their support and friendship. I get more out of life working for myself because I am happier. I can be here for the children, for the school runs – I often work with a child on my lap, and I am happy knowing I can make a positive difference to businesses and to other parents as well.

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Meghan now has 3 children and lives and works in Worthing, West Sussex.



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