

Bespoke jewellery

'It dawned on me my business was staring me in the face'

SUSIE JONES, 39, WORKED AS A LAWYER BEFORE DECIDING TO SET UP HER OWN BESPOKE JEWELLERY BUSINESS. SHE LIVES WITH HER PARTNER, TRISTAN, 50, AND HAS ONE CHILD, BARNABY, FOUR

'From graduation, I worked as a lawyer for a top London firm. On paper it was a prestigious job but the reality was different. It was stressful, there was no work-life balance and the day-to-day work was repetitive. It was a "carrot stick" culture, which wasn't for me. I wanted to do something I enjoyed but not give my whole life over to it.

'When I became a mum I knew I couldn't go back or I wouldn't see my child, but I didn't have an alternative plan. I realised I wanted to work for myself.

'The jewellery idea came about because I wanted to buy an heirloom piece to mark the occasion of Barnaby's birth and I could not find anything in the shops. I designed my own

celebration pendant made from solid gold and, having worked in the jewellery business before I became a lawyer, I had the contacts to have it made by a goldsmith. Everyone loved it and it gradually dawned on me that my business was staring me in the face.

'I spent over a year finding the right team to make the pendant to a high standard, and then all initial sales were by word of mouth. People see it and straightaway get why it's so special.'

FAITH IN MYSELF

'I'm a bit of a control freak, so I love being my own boss, doing my own thing, meeting customers and being able to discuss

their designs; it's so much more fun than negotiating contracts. But I've had to learn a different way of thinking and develop faith in my own ability, having been so used to having a team of people to bounce ideas off.

'The best part is that my customers have chosen my pendant to celebrate an important occasion in their lives - that's such a lovely feeling and really moving to me.

'If you want to start your own business, spend some time every day working on your dream, even if it's just half an hour. It's amazing what you can achieve in such a short space of

time. It's the best thing I've done - and the hardest - but it's all worth it.'

www.mildredjones.co.uk

AN EXPERT VIEW

Have you got an idea for a business but don't know where to start? Natasha Stanley, head coach at CareerShifters (www.careershifters.org) has some top advice:

● **IF YOU'RE NOT HAPPY AT WORK, YOU KNOW.** Maybe you 'fell into' your job and now, years later, can't understand how you are still surrounded by people you can't relate to, doing work you don't feel connected with.

● **TO HELP YOU FIGURE OUT** what you'd love to get paid for, create a group of people around you who can support the journey. The most powerful accelerator in a career change is a supportive network.

● **ACTION PLAN.** You can spend years trying to figure it out, but if your ideal career was in your head, you'd have found it by now. Try new

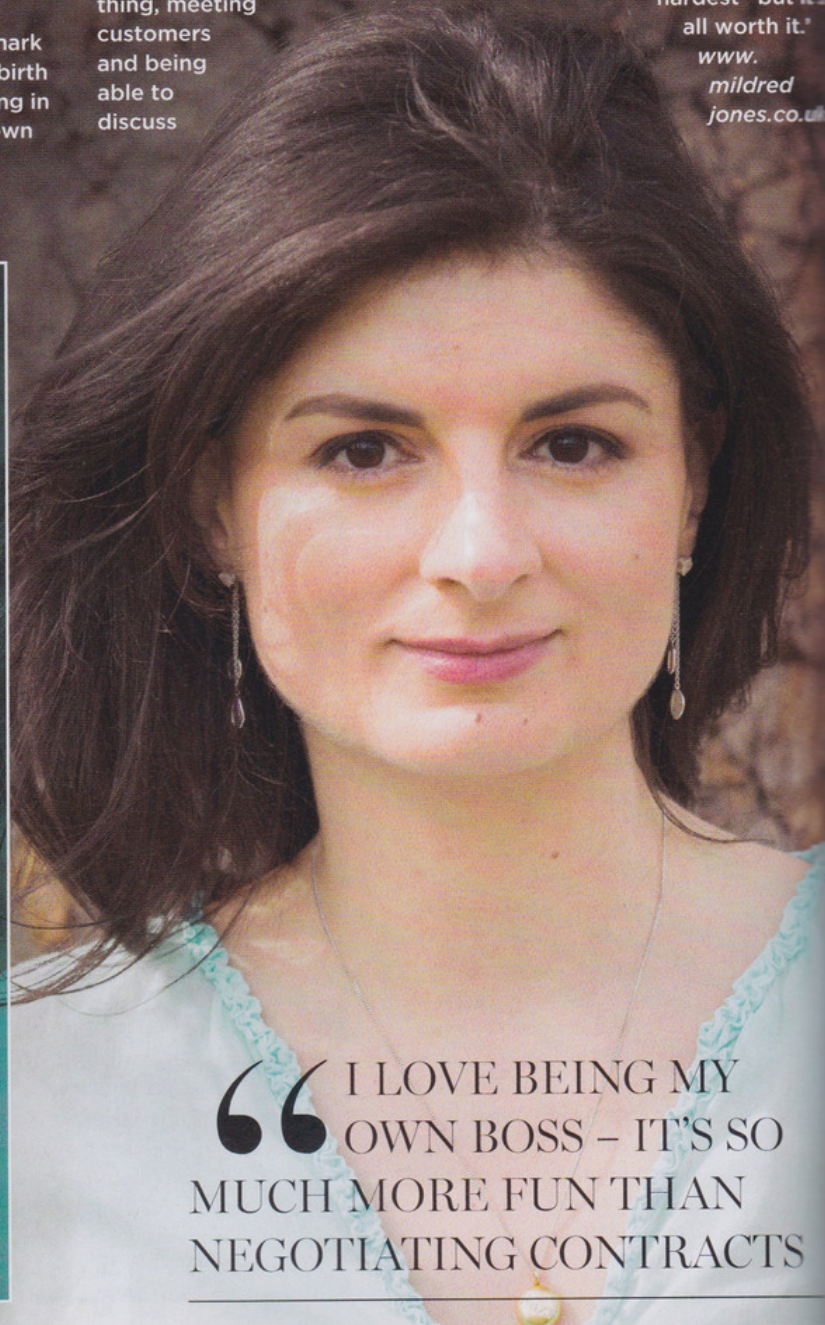
things and reach out to people who inspire you and already work in the industry that interests you.

● **NOT CHANGING DIRECTION IS USUALLY A QUESTION OF FEAR.**

You've spent years building your career and it pays your bills. It's closely tied to your identity and it can be the 'better the devil you know' when it comes to career change.

● **HOW TO START?** What's the lowest-risk way you could test out your ideas in the real world? How could you turn your plan into a quick project to test alongside your day job?

● **THE RIGHT DECISION?** If you set out to make a career change based on money or a shorter commute, you're treading dangerous ground. But to challenge and discover yourself? It's scary, but I can't think of anyone who came out worse off. ●



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