

Which person

- 1 mentions how good it is being able to make your own decisions?
- 2 enjoys seeing employees make a success of things?
- 3 had to solve a technical problem before launching the business?
- 4 is surprised to have attracted such a wide variety of clients?
- 5 is happy to have received positive feedback from clients?
- 6 sometimes feels anxious about financial aspects of the business?
- 7 took time to decide what type of business to start?
- 8 was able to draw on experience gained in a similar working situation?
- 9 was keen to make use of a wide range of existing skills?
- 10 was keen to work on a more personal level with clients?

Starting your own business

We talked to four people who gave up working for somebody else and started their own business

A Beautician

I had to rethink my future when the multi-national company I worked for as a marketing executive decided to move my job to the USA. My life back then, wearing designer clothes and taking regular long-haul flights, couldn't be more different from today. Well, I wanted a job where I'd have the chance to interact with people more, and saw a gap in the market for a beauty salon locally. Working for yourself is great as you can make your own mind up about things and you aren't driven by someone else about when and how you do that. But the flipside is that there's nobody to share the burden with when you wake up in the middle of the night worrying about how you're going to pay the rent. But I have no regrets.

B Gym owner

After seventeen years working in banking, I wanted to try something totally different. A business that used a combination of my financial, sporting and parenting experience, but which didn't involve such long exhausting hours at the office appealed to me a great deal. I came across the concept behind The Little Gym by accident when I was surfing the Internet. It's a novel concept that had gone down really well in the USA. It caters for

children from four months to twelve years, giving them good-quality physical instruction and a cerebral work-out at the same time. Having control of my own life is a definite high, as is seeing my staff doing a good job. Every day is different, so it's never boring.

C Caterer

I worked for a big international company, but was no longer finding it rewarding. I'd completed twenty years' service, so I had some money saved up, but not enough to retire on. But I took six months off and we went to stay with my wife's family in Spain. It was a good opportunity to ponder the question: 'What next?' That's when we got the idea for Tapas in a Box. We were in a bar eating the local Spanish food called 'tapas' and I thought: 'This would be perfect for people back home who want to have a great, relaxed time with friends, without spending ages cooking.' The challenge was then to work out how to deliver the mix of foods all at once, because tapas includes things like raw almonds and chilled cheeses as well as the hot things that need heating in an oven. Once we'd cracked that, we were up and running. I can't stress too much the thrill you feel when a customer tells you they've had a great time. The sense of having gone from a new idea to actually delivering something good is very motivating.

D Virtual PA

I'd been a secretary and personal assistant (PA) for twenty years and had begun to dread the thought that I'd be at the same desk until I retired. When the company announced that its European office was to close, I could've taken a drop in salary and found another job locally, but decided to set up my own business instead. I got my idea because, in effect, I'd been a virtual PA all along. My boss was usually only in the office a couple of days a month, so we'd always worked remotely by email and phone calls. I thought I could offer a similar service to other busy people. Now I've got all sorts of regular clients, including surveyors, solicitors, an advertising agency and even an author. I never expected such a mix. I can't wait to see what challenges lie in store for me.