

# Different reasons but all agree on benefits of solo

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LEAVING a successful corporate career to go it alone can be one of the most stressful situations facing potential entrepreneurs. We asked three North East businesspeople for their tips.

## **Nigel Begg, managing director of South Tyneside-based Aspire Technology Solutions:**

"I spent most of my career working for several global clients in central London, but I began to realise that there was a lack of quality IT staff in London.

"It was when I was working as an independent IT consultant that a client approached me to manage a few projects, and I realised that there were very few IT service businesses which could offer both software development services and server complex infrastructure skills. So I decided to form a business in Whitburn where I was born and bred. I approached the best development and infrastructure people I knew, and brought them all together under one company: Aspire. We now employ 20 people and I haven't looked back since.

"My aspirations at the beginning were just to make it through the first year, but we smashed our targets and cleared £1.4m in our first year."

## **Sharon Kell, who founded Newcastle-based matchmaking company Coco Moon and runs coaching services company SK Tipping Point:**

"I literally followed my intuition. I guess the turning point for me was when I identified that work was about much more than the financial reward, and recognising that I wanted to find something new which excited me.

"I had experienced first-hand the relationship difficulties that we all face when we have demanding fast-moving careers, and was lucky enough to work with an executive coach in business. I saw the differences it made to how effective I was, and it became apparent that those who are successful in business are not necessarily as successful in their own personal lives. This was the start of my going-it-alone experience.

"Since starting the business, I've far exceeded my own expectations, albeit not without challenges along the way. I believe that going it alone and making the decision to leave a really well-paid safe job was one of the best decisions I've ever made."

## **Simon Pearson of the Pearsons Group recruitment and marketing company in Middlesbrough:**

"I used to run the Teesside office of a Leeds-based recruitment and marketing company, but after spending 17 years working for someone else, I decided to set up my own business. I saw things that could be done differently, and I wanted to improve them.

"The company I worked for didn't think the North East was the place to further their business, but I decided to start my recruitment and marketing digital communications company in Middlesbrough in 1968. I could see a real opportunity for a home-grown marketing and recruitment communications organisation.

"I had thought about starting my own business before but I wasn't really bold or brave enough to do it, but it's the best thing I've ever done.

"Running my business has been exciting, rewarding and stimulating. It has also been incredibly stressful, but the advantages far outweigh the negatives."

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