

From Crew to Captain

**Making the transition from working for
a big institution, to working for yourself**

by David Mellor



What are the Motivators?

- *Personal Interest – doing something you like, something you are passionate about*
- *Direct reward for efforts*
- *Flexibility*
- *Work/life balance*
- *Quality of life*
- *Control own destiny*
- *Own Boss*
- *Independence*
- *Financial control*
- *Keeping busy*
- *No politics*
- *Stimulation*
- *Exploiting a gap in the market*
- *Using existing/new skills – the way you want to use them*
- *Fulfilment*
- *Fun*
- *Freedom*

Figure 1.2

All of these will be referenced at different points in the book, and there will be some follow-on Fact Sheets. (That is a promise!).

Motivators

Let's take stock for a minute.

Why would you want to do this? Are we all individually or collectively mad even thinking of setting up our own businesses?

Do you really want to give up the security of a regular, predictable salary? How do you feel about having to work to a survival budget until your business is fully functional?

It might help you to reflect on some of the reasons. (See Figure 1.2).

Let's consider a couple of these in more detail.

Firstly fulfilment; something I have seen over the last eight years is that people get a massive buzz and a sense of fulfilment out of having an idea, getting it onto paper, and then proving to themselves that they can actually go and do it. The money is almost secondary; I stress almost secondary! Proving to yourself that you don't need a big organisation and that you can do it on your own is hugely fulfilling.

Secondly, flexibility. This one is very important to me. My daughter, who is now 22, was 13 when I started my own business. She is a very talented athlete. At the age of 12 she was playing senior ladies hockey; put a stick in her hand and she is frightening!

She went on to captain club, school and county; she also played at university, both at Durham and at the University of California. A number of her matches were during the week, when I could be in Singapore, or New York, but certainly not in downtown Reigate. All of a sudden now, if I could organise my diary, I could take the afternoon off. If that meant I had to work in the evening or part of the weekend, that was my call - I was the boss!

There is no better feeling as a parent than watching one of your kids doing something that they really enjoy and excel at; what made me sorry was that my son was about to go off to university; he was a very talented rugby player and I had missed many opportunities to see him play during the week. It is something you can't put a price on financially, so this benefit became really important to me.

Thirdly, exploiting a gap. Now most people going down this route will probably either be doing something differently or better than

*Our interviews showed
that these were the most
common motivators:*

- 1. Fulfilment*
- 2. Flexibility*
- 3. Exploiting a Gap*

current providers. Occasionally you will find someone who will be exploiting a gap. I had the pleasure of meeting one such lady early in my mentoring career, called Claire Brynteson. Her business idea, which she developed whilst working in the world of investment banking, was shaped by her own needs and the glaringly obvious needs of everyone around her.

Claire never felt in control of her own life and it was the simple things that she found hard to juggle alongside her working days and the pressure of having too much to do with too little time was getting on top of her. Her dry cleaning, car services, household repairs, bill paying and paperwork, organising holidays, birthday presents, cleaning carpets etc. She realised that she needed a helping hand in life, one pro-active, competent person who could float in and take over when she needed her to and disappear again without cost when she didn't.

Claire had concierge services on offer at work as an employee benefit, although that didn't help. She didn't need to secure a last minute table at a top London restaurant and didn't need theatre tickets that often. She needed someone with keys to her house, based nearby and armed with a kitty who could go shopping,

meet and oversee the plumber at home, book some flights, feed the cat whilst she was away and at the same time, get rid of that ever increasing paper mountain (as she created the filing system in the first place), take the husband's shoes for repair and organise a replacement oven.....getting the picture? She had a constant list the length of her arm that felt stressful to even think about.

A smart, dedicated yet flexible and cost effective personal assistant, to enable all busy people to stay on top of things and actually relax and enjoy their precious time outside work.

There were hundreds of employees at the company Claire worked at, who she knew would welcome a service of this kind and that was only one company in only one town. There was obviously an enormous market and Claire had an excellent idea to put in front of it. She called her venture buy-time.co.uk and she did not charge her customers any membership fees nor did she ask them to commit to any particular usage. She gave them a dedicated assistant in life that they paid for by the hour. She offered discounts to customers purchasing blocks of hours in advance, to have on account and gave them a full year to use the hours.

Claire says: “it really was just what I needed for myself and consequently I have used the services of my own company ever since”.

Her company buy-time.co.uk has developed into providing business support solutions to entrepreneurs, sole traders and small to medium sized businesses. Professionals and companies now may outsource their administration to exactly fit their requirements and save themselves all the ongoing costs of hiring an individual. In addition, these customers have the freedom of a virtual PA, who can also work from the customer home or office and also run errands, attend meetings and travel on business trips. She manages rental properties and private households too, giving a combined, comprehensive helping hand and really freeing the customers to focus on their businesses.

So, it can be seen that when a gap is spotted, an effective idea can become a pulsating, growing business and with the right people, at the right time, the business can continue to go from strength to strength.