

## 'Be progressive, proactive and don't run before you can walk'

**TINA WOOLLARD** launched her innovative **Virtual Assistant** company in October 2001 as a sole-trading home-based business, serving small-to-medium sized clients. Her company has expanded and while she works long hours, she says she loves the freedom of working for herself. Tina tells us how she started her business and developed it into the successful force it is today



AFTER working as a PA for various companies for more than 15 years and being praised for my efficiency, time management and enthusiasm, I decided, after thinking long and hard, to start my own secretarial business from home.

Armed with the name, TMW Secretarial Services I registered with the Inland Revenue, sought advice from Business Link, created stationery and a website. I advertised like mad looking for free advertising where I could and networked till I dropped!

To my delight, I was called by a company only a stone's throw from my home, who were looking for a part-time outsourced secretary. I attended a meeting, carried out sample copy typing work and they took me on evenings and weekends covering their overflow work.

More than four years later, I still work for this company and several others. Good relationships and high standards have rewarded me with a good stream of referrals.

**Tina's  
success  
shows  
there  
is 'life  
after PA'**

My husband joined the company as a partner in April 2004 and the same month we voluntarily registered for VAT.

In May 2005 we were audited and achieved BS EN ISO 9001:2000 accreditation for the provision of general, special and virtual secretarial office services. Only 3% of the UK business population has been awarded this prestigious accreditation and we are very proud. We are now in our second year of ISO having again passed for 2006.

Thanks to this success, I have been able to add another string to my bow - the world's first online copy typing and digital audio transcription website.

In April last year, Tesla Typing! went 'live' and in August 2005 we branched out to corporate clients, ie recruitment agencies, schools, colleges, HR departments and recruitment consultancies.

I've further gone on to create a VA directory website - [www.va-directory.com](http://www.va-directory.com) - for secretarial/clerical/pa/administrative/office related virtual assistants to advertise

themselves and for potential employers of their services to be pointed in the right direction for a VA to suit their needs.

Last year we were nominated and selected for the Regional DTI / Interforum E-commerce Awards 2005.

I never thought when I started my little business that one 'originally sole trader' VA could grow and gain so much in such a short amount of time.

I hope our success is evidence to anyone thinking of starting their own business that it really is achievable. With the correct research, advice, hard work, determination and lots of networking anyone can achieve it.

Be progressive, proactive, don't try running before you can walk and enjoy working for yourself; once you've freed yourself from the restraints of employed existence, you will never want to go back!

Be under no illusions though - it can be a hard slog trying to gain your first client, but if you keep your standards high and never stop promoting your business you can go far!

Not being one to turn down a chance to assist and aid others, recently I luckily came across, through a VA Associate, information about a brand new website called [supportbritain.com](http://supportbritain.com).

The site is completely not-for-profit. Remuneration through membership fees (£24 a year for businesses and £10 a year for individuals) and sponsorship deals goes into a 'pot' to be able to deal out grants to the most voted for start-ups and/or established businesses.

This website is only three months in the making and is set to be one of the fastest growing websites in the UK. I also enquired into what it would entail to become a sponsor - their first! A sponsorship deal was struck and I am now actively campaigning with other affiliate members to get the word out there about [supportbritain.com](http://supportbritain.com)

We are hoping that with the support of other businesses and individuals we can get the profile of the site raised and in the long term gain celebrity assistance [which I am working on through contacts] to aid in public promotion. This would take the form of presenting a grant to the 'winning sole trader/business owner' decided by the voting process. The grant will aid their business in any way they see fit - marketing, promotion, purchase of equipment/stationery, etc.

Tina Woollard MIQPS



**Support Britain.com**

The logo for Tina's company (left) and the logo for her latest venture (above). In between, she has developed the world's first online copy typing and digital audio transcription website