



Event specialist has business success *Covered*

A County Durham entrepreneur, who found herself out of work as a result of the economic downturn, has proved there are still opportunities to set up a successful business after recognising a gap in the market to supply quality chair covers table linen and accessories to the UK events market.

Sarah Pittendrigh launched Simply Bows & Chair Covers in January 2009, and has now launched a franchise operation to manage increasing customer demand nationally. Sarah, who has had the role of brand manager for Jaguar and Land Rover Cars and formerly a Marketing Director for a National Event Company, said "It had been suggested, while I was in my previous role, that we bring the supply of chair covers and table linen in-house as it had been identified that there was an inconsistency in service and quality among our suppliers. I thought it was something that to do well had to be a specialist project, for which we did not have the time. However after losing my last job I realised I wanted the autonomy associated with self-employment, and I saw there was a big opportunity in the North East to specialise in high quality table linen and chair covers."

12 months on Simply Bows and Chair Covers has established itself as the preferred supplier for many of the region's most prestigious venues including Close House Hotel, Seaham Hall, Wymyard Hall, Rockliffe Hall, Dordford Hall and the BALTIC to name but a few. In less than a year, the business has supplied chair covers and accessories for hundreds of weddings and already has a strong order book for 2010 and 2011. With the business growing at such a pace and Sarah

keen to retain a work-life balance, she decided that franchising the business would be the best way to manage growing demand, rather than spreading the company to thinly which could compromise the quality of service we would deliver.

She said: "I had started to get enquiries from as far down as London for client events at venues such as Grosvenor House, however having travelled a lot in my previous role, I was keen that my new venture allowed me the flexibility to be able to spend more time with my family and focus on developing my territory of County Durham and Northumberland.

The business already has three franchisees on board, Lucinda Thompson who heads up Sunderland and Tees Valley, Ivana Thomson who heads up Newcastle and North Tyneside and Jo Harris who heads up North Northumberland. Interest in the Franchises is now starting to come in for the rest of the UK.

Despite her early success, Sarah is not complacent: "The business is well ahead of targets for the year and interest in the franchise operation has way surpassed my expectations. However, having experienced how a successful business can be affected by economic conditions, I have carefully planned every investment to help secure the long-term future of the business."

If you are interested in becoming a Franchisee or know someone who may, then please do not hesitate to email or visit our website. To view our new range of chair covers and accessories for Spring 2010, please do not hesitate to contact us for a private appointment. Ring Sarah on 07595 549623.



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