

“Modern technology makes it much easier to run my online company remotely”

ALICIA COWAN, 40

CREATE AN ONLINE BUSINESS



“I found a new way of doing the job I loved, rather than changing career”

ALICIA COWAN, 40, is a virtual PA. She works from the north London house she shares with her husband Matt.

THE IDEA I loved working as a personal assistant, but felt I should be doing more. When a friend suggested I set up on my own, she stopped me in my tracks. I'd thought change meant a new career, not just a new way of doing my job, but technology means I can be as quick and efficient from home.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT I commandeered our home office to launch my online business, Absolute PA, in 2009. I had £8,000 in savings, enough to cover business and living expenses for four months. I designed a basic logo, spent £1,500 on a colour printer, and £500 on business cards and a website. I took a course for Virtual PAs and also joined a local business-networking group, where I met my first client, the owner of a small PR firm.

WHERE I AM

NOW I've got a strong client base – some I've never met, and others I'll have a catch-up coffee with. I handle invoicing, phone calls, emails – and help my clients market themselves online, via social media such as LinkedIn. If they need something I can't offer, I outsource the work. I sell monthly blocks of time, priced at an hourly rate.

THE FUTURE I'm earning more than my old salary (about £40k), and I'm developing the social media side of the business.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE Switching off. In the first year, I worked constantly. Now, I usually stop when Matt gets home.

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT Making a difference to my clients – having my help frees them up to be more successful.

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

LAUNCHED June 2009
START-UP COSTS £1,500
FIRST YEAR'S TURNOVER £11,000
CURRENT TURNOVER £40,000
CURRENT PROFIT £35,000
absolutepa.com

New ways with

HOME WORK

Sian Lewis talks to four women who've found ingenious ways to successfully run a career from home

Could you start an online business? Visit societyofvirtualassistants.co.uk and runanonlinebusiness.co.uk for advice from choosing a name to setting up a payment system.