



If you have designs on being a **stylist**, join the growing list of ladies doing it for themselves

Ding, dong, it's the Avon lady! Well, not quite. Many will remember the days when Avon first came calling, and while today the institution has made a successful comeback, it isn't the only brand utilising the direct selling business model.

Developed and originally launched across the pond, luxury jewellery brand Stella + Dot is now very much establishing itself in the UK, much to the delight of aspiring female entrepreneurs.

Set-up by Jessica Herrin, founder of Weddingchannel.com – the biggest online registry in the US, in 2009, Stella + Dot has taken the same business model but updated it, adding glitz, glamour and a glass or two of Prosecco.

"Setting up Weddingchannel.com was a fantastic experience for Jessica," explains Veryan Eperon-Roach, Stella + Dot country manager for UK and Ireland who is no stranger to these parts, having grown up here.

"The business ended up being showcased on Oprah where she was highlighted as a young female entrepreneur to watch. As a result, people ended up getting in touch with her asking for advice about how to work for themselves. Jessica found that there were so many women wanting to be able to work, but with flexibility.

"It was at that point that she came across the direct selling model, which in its oldest form people will of course recognise as Avon. She had never looked at something like that



before for a modern business, people seemed to think it was old fashioned. If you want more flexibility with your work you can have it, or on the flip side, you can build it up and make a real success of yourself," says Veryan. "Since it was launched in the UK in 2011 Stella + Dot has just grown and grown – it resonated with British women. The jewellery is gorgeous and the business model enables women to work how they like."

Veryan highlights that women who join Stella + Dot – who become stylists rather than reps, use it to either supplement their own income, or in some cases, run it as their full-time job. Lincolnshire ladies have already joined, becoming stylists and more are being encouraged to follow in their footsteps.

"From firewomen to psychiatrists we have all kinds of women becoming stylists," she says. "They love their jobs, but they love having something creative on the side that isn't quite as serious. It's a way to have fun and earn some extra money. Stylists will host trunk shows at people's homes, where their sample jewellery is on display for people to try. The hostess puts on a little spread and pops open some fizz, it's a great way to get the girls together.

"You don't really get to go shopping with your girlfriends after the age of 15, it used to be such an event, going to the shops on a Saturday. These trunk shows give women the chance to enjoy that same quality time with their friends." Visit www.stelladot.co.uk

The MD keen to inspire the county's next generation

Since its birth 25 years ago, Saxilby-based company Chiselwood has expanded its team and premises, been awarded numerous accolades including East Midlands Winner for Interior Design for a Private Residence in the 2012 International Property Awards and Lincolnshire Business of the Year, and welcomed private commissions throughout the UK, Europe and even as far as the Caribbean.

But behind all of this, at its heart Chiselwood is still the family business it was when founders Mel and Martin Holliday opened the doors back in 1989.

While Martin works tirelessly as the driving force behind the design and craftsmanship elements of the business, managing director Mel has a firm hand on the day-to-day smooth running of Chiselwood, its accounts and all areas of HR.

Mel says: "Martin's not keen on the computer side of things," says Mel. "I like analysing things and making graphs, while Martin is much more creative. He is much happier drawing or engaging in a creative process. I like routine, Martin is spontaneous. So we give each other bite-sized pieces of information from our respective areas of speciality, which works and has always worked for us."

This wasn't always the case for Mel though. Preceding Chiselwood Mel's career blossomed in medicine, working in the NHS and private practices for nearly nine years before joining Martin full-time at Chiselwood.

Mel adds: "When we first set-up the business I looked after the paperwork to help Martin, that was alongside running my private practice, and then the children were born, but I started to feel as though I was in too many places at once. Something had to give and it was the practice.

"I am a list-maker and I think that women who juggle a home with work have to be disciplined on a day-to-day basis, choosing where they spend their time. "When I look back, it's no wonder people thought we were mad. But we enjoyed it all. Yes we lived with ongoing projects and ideas when it came to the house and business, but our life was and is full. I look at the kids now and I don't think they've missed out on any quality time with us."

With Mel's first introduction into the company now a distant memory, her role and what it entails has grown in line with the business.



Mel and Martin Holliday

"We've just finished two projects, one in the Caribbean and one in Portugal, both of which were for previous clients. For us that has been so important," Mel explains. "The money side of things has never been our drive.

"It's the quality of the design and relationship we have with our clients that matter. We treat people the way we would like to be treated. A lot of the projects we're working on at the minute are people we have worked with before.

"More and more people are now coming to us for much more than

kitchens and bespoke furniture.

"They're coming to talk to us about layouts, sounds systems, heating, lighting, they're investing in a project. We're there to offer advice, and we're now involved in every aspect which is exactly what we've wanted – we want clients to look to us for the whole package."

Five years ago she began to help in primary schools, creating business awareness through the Young Enterprise programme, which was the tip of the iceberg.

"I was very aware that youngsters didn't understand about business generally, they

didn't grasp that they could go out and do something other than go on to university, that's why I became involved with Young Enterprise. A natural progression from there was to work closely with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) advising years 9 to 12 about careers and apprenticeships.

"There is less and less emphasis being put on to the importance of work experience and finding a career through learning."

Mel's work within the education sector led her to become a CITB Ambassador in 2013, as well as a

non-executive director at the Education Business Partnership (EBP). She adds: "The National Citizens Service scheme is now something we run through EBP three times a year.

"A four-week programme, it is completely geared to helping youngsters become more employable. I enjoy working with the youngsters, to see they can rack up 72,000 community hours in Lincolnshire in a year, and raise £26,000 for local charities, for me that is really inspiring."

Mel's commitment to furthering the assistance young people receive in regard to their future employment has now manifested itself in a new charity, One Me, being launched in the summer.

Set up to support young people with financial support and bursaries for employment within East Midlands region, for Mel One Me represents a way to secure a brighter future, and not just for young people but for skills slowly disappearing off the radar.

"People have had a very negative view on plumbing, cabinet making, and similar skills, and as a result they are dying out," she says. "There isn't the skill base coming through now that we have had in the past.

"To get to the point where people automatically think about completing an apprenticeship rather than doing a degree would be amazing."

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