New discovery

During university, Natasha wasn’t really sure of what she wanted to do with her degree, until one day she discovered a niche in the market. ‘I had a light bulb moment sitting in the kitchen of our shared student house. We lived on the outskirts of London; there was no place where dessert was the main feature. The more we talked about it the more it seemed like a good idea which fell into a niche.’

‘I was the only one of four doing a business degree and so I decided, as a pet project, to do some research, attend some Business Link workshops and ‘play’ with the idea just for fun! Fun turned into work and the rest is history!’

Natasha believes that without the use of her degree, success wouldn’t have come so easy. Combining her academic knowledge with her parent’s business experience meant that running a business presented fewer difficulties.

‘Every business module I studied has helped me understand how it can impact business, no matter how large or small. I now know how to manage that impact and change.’

Life doing business

Just one month after graduation, her plans to open ‘Flirtease’, a dessert and cocktail lounge in Northwest London, came into fruition. Natasha’s day-to-day activities consist of the more operational duties than anything else.

‘Every day is different; you never know what will break down or who will call in sick. An average day consists of accounting (the bottom line is the most important thing) completing the HR rota (in this industry there is a high staff turnover as most look at it as a stop gap), stock taking and a big chunk of marketing including social media and creating innovative methods to reach target demographic.’

After successfully running the business for six years, Natasha sold it just before the Olympics to invest the profit into emerging market Tanzania to open up a larger store. She is now in the process of expanding her second store in Tanzania. This year marks two years since it has opened.

Growing the business and surviving through recession, then selling it on six years later has been a challenge for me, but equally, it’s been just as exciting.’

Becoming an entrepreneur

For those who would like to start their own business, it’s not all glitz and glam. ‘A lot of people I have seen come into the industry are attracted by the glamour and social aspect, but in fact its long hours, stressful and labour intensive. You have to be realistic about your goals and what you’re looking for from a career. Being self-employed isn’t a job, but more of a lifestyle choice’

It’s essential to have those all-important transferable skills as they’ll come in handy when running a business. Starting off as an entrepreneur takes a lot of planning, thought and high level skills. ‘Just because you can cook doesn’t mean you will be great at running a restaurant.’ Natasha is now taking more of a consulting role in the business as she wants to broaden her skills base by taking on a different challenge within the education sector.

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