

AN

**EXPAT**

SPECIAL REPORT

● STARTING  
● A BUSINESS  
● OVERSEAS

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# Do you have what it takes to take your work overseas?

Either you see an international move as the opportunity to reinvent yourself and do something new, or you see it as the end of doing something you enjoyed in a place that had become home. Of course, a move has elements of both these viewpoints, but where there are endings, there are also beginnings set to follow, and a positive attitude is vital if you want to keep your career on track.

Moving on can give you the chance to look at your personal collection of strengths, skills, talents and values and decide how you could best turn them into fulfilling work in your new location.

If you are choosing to move abroad to start a new life then the chances are you will be faced with taking your career with you, or starting a new one when you arrive. Whichever scenario seems to match your own, the move will allow you to reinvent yourself big time. Lucky you!

Many expatriates become inspired by the local community to branch out into a new venture that they would not otherwise have thought of back home.

What all successful entrepreneurs have in common is a collection of traits that define them as the kind of people willing and able to run their own show, not once in one location, but repeatedly if necessary.

# What makes an entrepreneur?

According to Iris Harvey, who co-presented a workshop on global entrepreneurship with Diane Morris at the 2002 Global Living Conference in Brussels, women-owned businesses employ more workers than the Fortune 500 companies. Women, it seems, are natural entrepreneurs.

Few people can expect a job for life, and faced with so many choices these days, few would actually want one. According to Glenda Stone, the CEO of Aurora Gender Capital Management, women move to run their own businesses because they thrive on risk. They find long-term employment poses too little of a challenge for them.

As women attempt to have it all, they are discovering that running your own business is an effective way of achieving control, flexibility, variety and challenge. It also gives them a reasonable chance of taking time off to attend the school sports day and having holidays that fit more closely round the children's needs.

Interestingly, men are increasingly attracted by the appeal of entrepreneurship too. More and more men opt to work as consultants and contractors, enjoying the buzz of change and a more flexible lifestyle.

Entrepreneurship is a key skill found in those expatriates who manage to create and maintain a portable career; a career that moves when they do, takes a break when they do, and can be picked up and put down again as required. Interestingly, once you have had the taste of running your own business, it can be hard to go back to routine; a set work schedule and just four weeks holiday a year.

If you think of yourself as freelance, self-employed, a sole trader or a consultant then you are an entrepreneur. Whether you make and sell strawberry jam at school craft fairs, or import goods from Vietnam into Scotland, you are still in charge of your work. You are still, effectively an entrepreneur.

**When you are an entrepreneur you are in charge of:**

- Investment of time
- Money
- Marketing
- Risk taking
- Innovation
- Creating the business
- Building the business

Does this sound like you?

I first went freelance in 1985, when a client I had been working for through my full-time job as a recruitment consultant, offered me the chance to write computer

courses for him. I knew the job had no guarantees, and might only last six months, but I accepted. I knew that I could do some temporary secretarial work at the same time, or to tide myself over, until the next opportunity arose. I have never been employed full-time by a company since.

One of the traits of an entrepreneur is the ability to wear several hats, or juggle several different mini-careers, at once.

This is commonly known as a portfolio career. I have had a portfolio of constantly shifting careers for almost 20 years now. My business streams have ebbed, flowed, and sometimes dried up completely depending on where I have been living and my other priorities at the time.

At one point, when we were living in Oman and I had two pre-school children, I spent an hour a week teaching creative writing, wrote one article a month for an airline magazine and one a month for a local publication.

I also worked as a distributor for Dorling Kindersley books, holding one book party a week. Then I made date chutney and sold that to friends and at school craft fairs. In addition I would teach desktop publishing on an ad hoc basis and wrote CVs for people. None of these income streams made me a fortune, but combined they gave me my professional identity, kept my brain

occupied and led me to meet new people and make new friends.

The word 'entrepreneur' is just a label. I think of myself as a serial entrepreneur. So let's take a look at what entrepreneurial spirit is all about.

**As an entrepreneur are you:**

- Confident of your abilities?
- Focused on opportunity?
- Keen to be independent?
- Able to rely on your abilities?
- Able to call on your network?
- Willing and able to grow your network?
- Happy to promote yourself and tell people what you do?
- Able to make quick decisions?
- Flexible and able to adjust to changes in opportunity and environment?
- The owner of a sense of humour?

If you can say 'yes' to any or all of the above, then you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur.

# Are you up to it?

Before you embark on your business idea, however large or small it may be, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- Will being an entrepreneur give me what I want from a career (money/time off/satisfaction/using the skills I already have)?
- Am I happy to work sometimes long or untraditional hours?
- Does my idea use my talents and skills?
- Is my idea founded on something about which I am passionate?
- Am I good at planning and organising things?
- Am I self-motivated?
- Am I able to view mistakes as learning experiences?
- Does my family support my idea?
- Can I live with an erratic income?
- Can I afford the financial and emotional risk if this fails?
- Am I willing to under promise and over deliver?

# Do you have the right assets?

Ask yourself whether you have the right personal, non-financial assets to make your idea a business success.

For example, are you able to write a decent letter and keep a record of your accounts?

Do you have a place, or space and time in which to work away from distractions?

Do you have the equipment you need?

Maybe you need a computer with certain software installed or a delivery van?

Do you have the skills to use that equipment, or do you need to learn how to use it first?

Are you financially able to set up your business and run it for a while, with all the costs that entails?

Ivan Gould of Gould Associates ([www.gouldassociates.co.uk](http://www.gouldassociates.co.uk)) wrote the dissertation for his MBA on female entrepreneurs and believes the five traits of entrepreneurs to be:

- Desire for control
- Strong self-motivation
- Problem-solving abilities

- Flexibility and lateral thinking
- Willingness to take risk

# Finding your Passion

They say that when you *'do what you love the money follows'*. Marsha Sinetar wrote a book of just that title, which convinced me to follow my own heart more than 15 years ago.

There are many ways to work out who you are and therefore what will motivate you. Here are some of the most important of them:

## 1. What makes you unique?

Discover your unique contribution. Ask yourself and others, what it is that you do both in work and your social life that really makes a difference.

## 2. What matters?

Ask yourself what *matters* to you most in the context of work and leisure. Try not to think of subjects such as accounting or cooking but focus on things like sharing, communicating, creating or initiating.

## 3. What do you need?

Ask yourself what you *need* to have in your work environment that you simply could not do without. Perhaps you need people around you,

to get recognition, to be alone or to have a routine?

#### **4. What's easy?**

Consider what it is that you do right now in work or play, that you find very easy and that makes you feel really good when you have completed it. Look for things that energise you.

#### **5. What have you done well?**

Look back over your past achievements and consider what motivated you to reach those goals. Was it fame? Praise? Money? The fact that it involved being with people? A deadline maybe?

#### **6. What feels right?**

Your intuition and your instinct will often tell you whether you are on the right path. Take a few days to live with each idea that you have, to imagine how life and work would be if you put it into action. Really visualise your dream. Consider how it feels in your head, your heart and your belly then follow your gut instinct.

#### **7. What motivates you?**

Consider what will make you get out of bed in the morning, day after day. Think about why you think you might like to do what you are thinking about. Is it for the money alone? It shouldn't be.

You should do a job because you actually *want* to. The work itself must motivate you. Or do you want to do it for the recognition, the satisfaction, because it will keep you busy, let you meet people? Be honest here.

Start doing some soul-searching. It is vital that you research your own desires and motivations before you decide on a new career overseas. Overseas you will be alone and without the support network of friends and colleagues that you have become used to back home.

I would recommend reading some books such as those mentioned above, and scheduling yourself plenty of thinking time. If you can, hire a career coach or work with a careers consultant. A coach will be able to guide you through all the processes I have mentioned before and many more.

But if you do nothing else make a promise to yourself that you will start asking people who know you well as a person and as a colleague what they consider to be your strengths and weaknesses. You may be in for some surprises.

## Create your idea

If you are lucky then the job you take with you can be exactly the same as the one you left behind. You pack up your tools of the trade and you are ready to work when you arrive. However, it is not always that simple. A plumber, for example, may need to make sure his or her qualifications are recognised in the destination country and to join the relevant members' associations before he is legally entitled to trade.

While nursing appears at first glance to be wholly portable as every country needs nurses, it is not always straightforward. For example, in Norway, a nurse can only be employed in the national health service if his or her Norwegian is fluent. And though an aromatherapist or reflexologist can trade in England after taking a short course, in Germany a complementary therapist must also be a qualified nurse. Language and qualifications are stumbling blocks that must be considered.

## Can you take your clients?

And if you do think you can take your current business with you, will your clients come too? Though trades like car mechanics, building and gardening may be easily transferred to a foreign location, do not under-estimate how long it will take you to establish your business and get clients. If you need physical customers to come through your door then expect it to take a year or two to build your business to a reasonable level. If you work online, and your clients are 'virtual', then there is no reason why you can't take them with you.

People do business with people they like and who are like them. Networking is the key to meeting people with whom you can create first a social and then a commercial connection.

# Do you have an eye for a market?

And what of your market? Do you know that people will want what you have to offer in your new location? Can you prove it? Sometimes what works well in one place fails in another even though the business is a great idea. This is when you may have to think laterally, and consider how to alter your business to fit the market and the climate.

When Paul and Julia Herbert (featured in Expat Entrepreneur) landed in France a decade ago, they had no idea what they were going to do and started off by helping local part-time expatriate residents to rent out their villas to holidaymakers. Their talent for spotting opportunities and building a talented network so that they can go for them has led to them now running more than 100 websites, all linked to the holiday business.

# How portable is your career?

Take a moment to assess the tools of your trade and consider how portable they may be.

The following may weigh nothing, but can you really take them with you:

- Education
- Experience
- Qualifications ... check they are recognised overseas
- Language skills ... check the level of fluency required
- Database of clients
- Network and networking skills
- Market and marketing skills
- Business experience
- Ability to think laterally
- Information sources

Being an entrepreneur means that you are able to think outside the box. You may have an idea for a product that would be perfect for one specific market; an entrepreneur will take that idea further. Think about other products that may appeal to that same market, or other markets that may find that same product

attractive. Consider how you might manage to sell additional products at the same time, or how to tempt existing clients to spend more money. These two areas are called cross-selling and up-selling.

When you have your idea, think about whether you want it to stay where it is, or whether you could have plans for expansion.

Check you understand and comply with all the legal considerations of your business before you start.

## Market your idea

It has been discovered that successful entrepreneurs consider the following when marketing their businesses:

- They start with an idea and THEN try to find a market for it
- They are excited about new ideas and concepts
- They anticipate and adapt to new trends and opportunities
- They start small
- They grow slowly
- They test the market and new ideas carefully before rolling them out
- They use their intuition
- They are great networkers
- They obtain most of their business through word of mouth and referrals

- They are not afraid to ask for what they want

It does not matter how good your product is, if you have no market for it. Think about who will buy your product or service.

- Will you sell to businesses, individuals or organisations?
- How will you target that market?
- Could you give talks about your area of expertise to local clubs?
- Could you write articles on the subject for the local press?
- Could you create a flyer and post it through letterboxes, or make a poster for a school, supermarket or library notice-board?
- Can you afford to advertise in the paper or on the radio, or would a short piece about you in the school magazine be just as effective?
- Which networking groups could you join in order to meet potential clients?
- If there is no suitable network for you to join, would you start your own?
- If you plan to start a website, will you send out a regular newsletter or e-zine to keep yourself and your business in the minds of the subscribers?

Iris Harvey, whom I mentioned earlier, has reinvented herself several times as she has moved internationally. She now has Mitsubishi and Prudential among the

clients for her company, which she calls Marketing Strategies and Solutions. Iris suggested all entrepreneurs do the following three things:

- Learn to distil your business message into two or three clever sentences, in order to make an impact quickly and effectively.
- Prepare a list of all the local and other relevant media (magazines, radio, TV, websites) who might be interested in writing about what you do.
- Prepare a press kit that explains what you do, together with any clippings or testimonials, ready to send to anyone who shows an interest.

# Getting started

However small your business is, you need to start out with a number of marketing tools, contacts and advice. These should ideally include:

- A corporate identity or brand with a logo and slogan
- Business cards and letterhead
- An e-mail address
- A website
- A telephone with answering machine
- A postal address
- A computer with email and word processing software
- Membership of professional or trade associations
- Networking expenses
- An outfit to wear that perpetuates your brand
- Legal advice
- Accounting and tax advice
- A place and time to work without interruption

## Are you ready?

If the previous pages have tempted you to have a go at being an entrepreneur and creating your own fully portable, tailor made career, then buy my book, “Expat Entrepreneur” where you will find more inspiration from case studies of many people like you who have created a portable career.

## **HOW TO CREATE AND BUILD YOUR OWN PORTABLE BUSINESS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD**

**Tens of thousands of people now move overseas for work or pleasure. If this is you, read on...**

Going to live in a new country can be the catalyst for a sea-change in your career. Opportunities that existed in one country may dry up in another. Sometimes it makes sense not to pursue one single career path but to adopt a shifting, growing, portfolio of portable careers.

- **Section 1** arms you with practical advice on how to choose a business idea that works for you and how to develop the right mindset.
- **Section 2** shares the remarkable stories of more than 23 international entrepreneurs as they share how they've maintained and built rewarding, portable careers in all four corners of the world.
- **Section 3** provides extensive links, resources and tips for expatriate entrepreneurs living in 35 countries

If you are considering working for yourself in a foreign land then this inspirational guide belongs in your suitcase, wherever you may be, wherever you may go and whatever you may hope to become.



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