

'Our Friendship M

New research shows a third of young women want to work for the... are joining forces with a friend to land their dream career. These fi

The Housemates

'We Turned Our Love Of Design Into Hard Cash!'

Laura Williams, 27, from London, and Georgina Coleman, 27, from Aberdeen, run their own shop

Laura:

"I met Georgina three years ago through a friend at a party. At the time I was working as an interior designer and doing some freelance graphic design while she was working in the City as an art underwriter. We hit it off immediately, and a year later I moved into her rented basement flat in west London. It was the perfect blank canvas for me to unleash my inner interior designer. Georgina was working as an art dealer by that time,

so there was a constant flow of new artwork, and I bought luxurious bed linen and throws and we tackled the rest of the house together. We made such a good team that we realised we should start our own business.

We rented a shop not far from our flat for £15,000 for the year – we used savings to put down the deposit for the first month and sourced our stock from new designers all over the UK and Europe. We've only been open a couple of months, but

it's going really well. While I still dabble in a bit of graphic design on the side, and Georgina does some part-time PA temping, we soon hope to dedicate ourselves to our shop full time."

Georgina:

"I've always enjoyed art, but it was when Laura moved in that I started to pay attention to interiors and realised how they went hand in hand. Our flat was a bit of a blank canvas – really neutral – so we set about transforming it, experimenting with different things and realised it was so much fun. I had been working as an art dealer, so it made perfect sense for us to combine our skills and make them readily available in a shop. It wasn't an easy decision to leave my job. I was earning a comfortable £30k plus salary, and setting up our own business seemed really uncertain, but now I'm so glad we've done it. There's a real sense of freedom in working with a friend that I wouldn't swap for any amount of money."



Georgina, left, and Laura

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT WWW.ECHOINTERIORS.CO.UK

The girls' interiors shop



Makes Us Thousands!

mselves, but going it alone isn't easy – so now many readers reveal how they've done it...

The Diet Buddies

'We Run A Boot Camp Together'

Sunny Moran, 28, and Jacqui Cleaver, 28, from Bournemouth, run New You Boot Camp

Sunny:

"Jacqui and I have known each other since sixth form. We were good friends, but what really bonded us was our fluctuating weight. At my heaviest, I weighed over 12st. We tried every diet together – from diet drink plans to a popcorn diet, and although we'd lose weight, the diets were too extreme and we could never keep it up.

After school, Jacqui went to study in Canada and one summer she came back looking fantastic. She'd lost 2st at a weight-loss boot camp out there. She inspired me to exercise and eat more healthily and I dropped from 12st to a more stable 9st.

When Jacqui moved back here for good, our diet conversations kept going back to that boot camp. We couldn't believe there were none over here. That's where we got the idea to set one up ourselves.

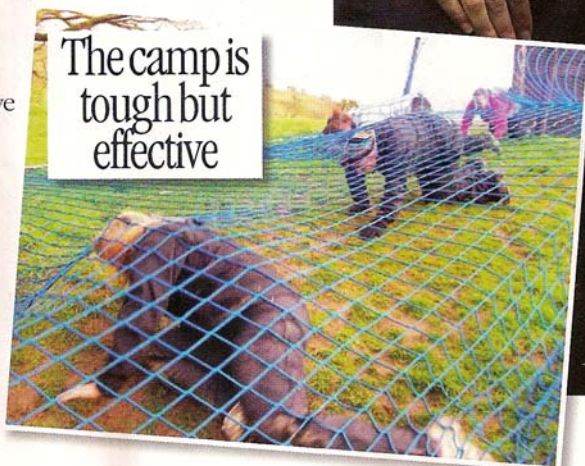
In the space of nine months, we recruited a trainer, built exercise programmes and planned to run it alongside our usual

jobs in PR and marketing. But then Jade Goody enrolled on a course, we featured on a TV programme and the business just exploded. We now run it full time, hosting 48 camps a year."

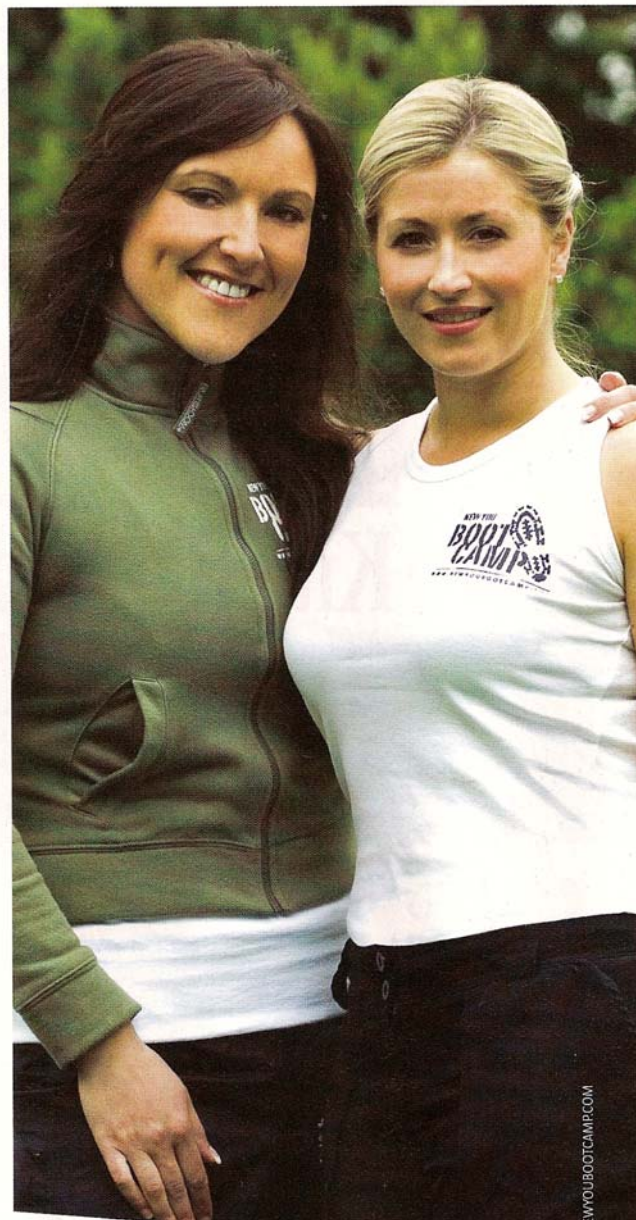
Jacqui:

"Becoming your own boss seemed daunting, but when Sunny suggested turning the boot camp into a joint business, I was thrilled. I've always struggled with my weight and I was a size 18 at my heaviest. Now I'm a stable size 10/12 and that's down to exercise, healthy eating and boot-camp training! Thankfully we've never argued and working together every day is fantastic."

The camp is tough but effective



Jacqui, left, and Sunny





The Beach Buddies

'We Kite Surfed Our Way To A New Career!'

Johara Sykes-Davies, 25, from north Wales, runs a kite surfing business with Zoe Burgess, 31, and Sheryl Conshue, 28

Johara, Sheryl and Zoe

Johara:

"I learnt to kite surf in Canada and Mexico after university and loved it. When I moved home to north Wales, where I worked as a water-ski instructor earning £12,000, I found our local beach was a great spot. The kiting community was quite small and that's how I met Zoe and Sheryl. We were in the minority as girls, so we

were out together every weekend. In December 2005, six months after we met, we decided to put on a teaching event. The local kiting shop, Turbulence, supported us, and Flexifoil, who make our kites, gave us training kit. We advertised locally and by 9am there were 25 girls on the beach. It all went so well we decided to keep going with events around the UK. We've called ourselves Turbulence Angels.

It didn't feel like we were starting a business – we just wanted to get more girls out kiting."

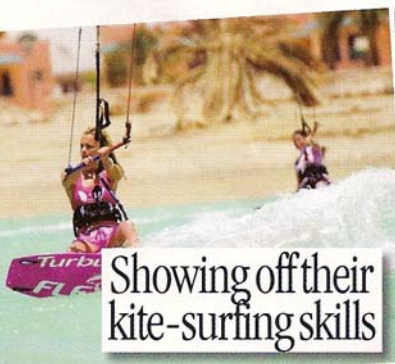
Sheryl:

"Working with friends means you spend all your time together. We aggravate each other, but we're also very close. The perks – like having paid holidays as part of the job – are great, and I still get my £24,000 salary from teaching."

Zoe:

"I get a real kick from inspiring other girls to kite surf, and the thought that I could give up my £20,000 sales job and earn from Turbulence Angels is exciting. People have heard of us all over the world, because we're the first to do what we're doing – we do feel incredibly lucky."

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT WWW.FLEXIFOIL.COM



Showing off their kite-surfing skills



Anna, left, and Cathy

Nights out led to the business inspiration

The Shoe-aholic Friends

'Our High Heel Obsession Will Make Us Rich!'

Fleur Patefield and Felicity Ive, both 31, from Essex, run Feet Fairies footwear

Fleur:

"I met Felicity eight years ago when we were both working in sales. We'd go out shopping together, trying on the highest shoes, but we'd often end up going home barefoot after a night out because our feet hurt. 'Why doesn't somebody invent a shoe you can fold up and put in your bag?' we'd say as we limped home. I just said: 'Why don't we do it ourselves?' Felicity thought I was mad, but the next day I cut up an inner-sole and stuck it to an old trainer sock, leaving the middle flexible enough to fold up. Soon we had a prototype – a ballet pump in a pouch that unfolded into a bag to carry heels. We raised £20,000 from savings and loans, and invested £10,000

on materials and £10,000 on fees. So far we've sold 2,000 pairs, so we've made £20,000 – enough to break even. It doesn't match my sales salary of over £35,000, but I hope to become a full-time Feet Fairy someday."

Felicity:

"Fleur and I bonded over our love of heels – I have about 100 pairs. I admit, I put fashion before comfort, so when we started thrashing out the idea for Feet Fairies, I didn't take it seriously. But before long things had really taken off. I still work in sales, and my own Feet Fairies have revolutionised my journey to work!"



Fleur, right, and Felicity, and their fold-up pumps

The Social Secretary Pals

'We Make A Living From Partying Together'

Cathy Williams, 29, and Anna Cussen, 30, both from Bristol, run events company Clifton Events

Cathy:

"I met Anna when we dated two best mates (now our husbands!) and we hit it off. Our group was made up of really laid-back men, so they looked to us to organise nights out. It didn't faze us to organise a dinner for 60 or birthday parties, in fact we really enjoyed it. After

university we both drifted into event jobs. Eventually, we thought: 'Why are we doing this for free?', so we spent a few hundred pounds setting up a website and were soon booked for our first gig – a gay wedding. Luckily it went really well. We've now done about 10 weddings and countless other events, from 60th

birthdays to Christmas dos.

We've been running for 18 months and we haven't given up our day jobs yet. We take a fee per event, which is 10 per cent of the cost. I got married last November and, of course, Anna and I organised my wedding together. I wouldn't have wanted it any other way."

HOW TO MAKE YOUR FRIENDSHIP PAY!

Thinking of setting up a business with your mate? *Look's* life coach, Jessica Chivers, has this advice:

- Check you have mutual goals – where do you see the business heading, what level of involvement do you want to have and what are you prepared to sacrifice for it?
- Separate your friendship from your working relationship, agreeing not to speak about work after a specific time each day and keep your weekends for socialising.
- Draw up a legal contract outlining what money

you've each invested, what your roles will be and how profits will be divided. Visit www.smallbusiness.co.uk for tips.

- Trust your intuition – just because you trust your friend doesn't mean she's always right when it comes to making business decisions – stay strong and keep your business head on.
- If you can't resolve an important decision, consult a business mediator such as www.businessmediationservice.co.uk for impartial and objective advice.