

Every parent struggles to balance work and family. If you work full time, you don't see enough of the kids, and if you are at home all the time it can be hard to feel you are doing anything beyond cooking, washing and cleaning. There are lots of different ways to earn around the family, including starting your own business. This may sound daunting, but read on to see how you could get your own enterprise going.

Think about what motivates you, before making any plans. List your priorities. Do you mainly just need to earn money, or do you miss using your brain. Do you have talents you feel are being wasted, or is there a skill that you would love to learn and use. Or, is your main motivation to stay with your children while finding some way to stretch the family budget? Elaine has a business selling craft supplies. She says, "It just got to the point where if I saw one more episode of Teletubbies I'd scream. I started a business that tied in with my hobby, and now I love buying and selling."

Now, take a look at your skills. Turn off the little voice in your head that says you're not good at anything. Write down simple things you do every day, like ironing or cooking. Note down courses you have been on, and ask others what they think you're good at. If there is a skill you'd love to have, call your local college to see if they offer a relevant course. Ask about help with funding and whether they have a crèche. Victoria has been running a website selling crafts and cards for a few years, and recently started a jewellery making course. She says, "I love making things, but was beginning to feel a bit limited in what I could make. This course has helped me learn a whole new set of skills, and I will be focusing my business on hand made jewellery now." Learn Direct Advice can help answer your questions about getting back into learning and put you in touch with sources of grants and loans.

How much time, money and effort would you be prepared to invest in starting up a business? Think realistically about the hours you can work, and what free time you have. Many work at home mums find all their time becomes consumed by the business. Jane says, "I started the business because I felt that I spent all my time doing stuff for the kids. I now have a growing business, but still don't get any time for myself." Some mums manage to work without childcare, but most find it easier if they have some time to work without the children. Will your partner or a relative care for the children for a few hours? If not, you may want to call your local authority's Early Years department for help with finding some childcare.

Once you have a business idea, do a little research. Look at competitors, gather brochures, check out websites and find out how much others are charging for similar products or services. Ask people if they would buy your product or service too. This will all help when you go on to prepare a business plan. Planning how you will promote your business is an essential part of your

business plan. PRBasics has lots of free resources and essential links. Visit the site to download a template to help you plan your business promotion, a template for writing your own press releases, and more.

Now you have read this article, do you want to start a business? It is not a decision to be taken lightly, and any business owner will tell you of the hours of hard work needed to be successful. If you are keen to get going, pop into your local Enterprise Agency for free and low cost advice on starting up and business planning. They also offer help in getting funding. The Inland Revenue can send an advisor to your house to advise you. Taking these first steps to running your own business will give you control over your time and the flexibility to be there to collect your children from school, attend sports day, and be around when they need you.

*This article is by Antonia Chitty, who runs [www.acpr.co.uk](http://www.acpr.co.uk), helping business owners with promotion. Her latest publication, **A guide to Promoting Your Business** (£15), is packed with affordable techniques for getting your business noticed. The book is written with busy working parents in mind, and can be worked through in short sections when you have a few minutes. Clear explanations, examples and exercises make it easy to pick up the essentials skills to boost your business. **A guide to Promoting Your Business** is available from [www.prbasics.co.uk](http://www.prbasics.co.uk) , [www.acpr.co.uk](http://www.acpr.co.uk) , [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and can be ordered from any bookshop if you quote ISBN 978-0955534508*

*Antonia's next book is a guide to family friendly ways to work. She is still looking to hear from more dads who have found a great way to achieve a better work life balance. You may have set up a business, taken on a franchise, or gone freelance. Email [Antonia@acpr.co.uk](mailto:Antonia@acpr.co.uk) if you have a story. Thanks to all the mums and dads who have replied so far.*