

Back to business



When I joined Business Doctors in 2013, I had a two-month-old baby. Before the franchise agreement was signed, I made the commitment to my partner that once her maternity leave ended, I would take responsibility for taking my son to and from nursery at least two days every week.

And this family-friendly framework that I built my business around has proved to be a very successful one. It gives me a much better work-life balance than I ever had in previous employed positions and it's allowed me to be around much more for my third child than I was for his older siblings, who are now 16 and 18.

Having graduated as an engineer, my background is nothing if not eclectic. I've had stints working with Shell, Texaco, Air Miles, Capita

and, since 2000, heading up various established digital businesses. My work took me all over the world and I was often away for extended periods. Late nights and working over the weekend became all too common.

When I discovered Business Doctors at the Franchise Show at Olympia London, I quickly felt a strong value match with its owners Rod Davies and Matt Livingston. I liked the passion they expressed about helping small and medium-sized business owners to reach their goals. There was genuine care behind their intentions and a real ethical commitment to providing practical, hands-on support.

Once I joined the network, I was pleasantly surprised by how collaborative it was. And a new regional clustering structure is set to bring the franchise even closer

together. Everyone at Business Doctors works together to talk through ideas, share expertise and experience, support each other with exhibitions and seminars and collaborate on tenders or large contracts. As a fundamentally sociable person, I need to feel connected to others and being part of a franchise has given me the human contact and support I would have craved had I gone it alone.

Another thing I love about being a Business Doctor is the variety of clients I work with. The definition of a small to medium-sized business is much broader than many people realise, taking in everything from one-man-bands to companies with up to 250 employees. I tend to work with clients on the upper end of the scale but that's just because the manufacturing and construction

businesses that I'm drawn to are usually that size. I also enjoy working with smaller digital, marketing and publishing businesses.

My real working high comes when I get a business owner to realise that they're working in their business and not on it. We call it the owners' trap and it's often a small to medium-sized business's biggest growth barrier. Many entrepreneurs benefit from external help when it comes to understanding what they can and can't do or what they should delegate. We often work with them to see the bigger picture and help them get to where they want to be. This is at the core of Business Doctors' work and it's a lot more satisfying than anything I've done before.

Business Doctors' low-key approach to selling really appeals to me and I believe this point of difference comes about because of the franchise's hometown nature. Established in the north of England in 2004, British sensibilities are at the heart of the company culture. In-your-face selling just doesn't come naturally to British people. As Business Doctors, we do a lot of networking and run free business growth seminars but we're trained to adopt a softy, softy approach to relationship building. This gentle approach works and within three years of joining the company, I was able to pay off the five-year bank loan I took out to cover my franchise fees and working capital.

There are many ways to be a successful Business Doctor and you'll be encouraged to be yourself. We don't conform to a type or stick to a script. Again, I think it's an inherent part of our Britishness to understand that it takes all sorts. We are introverts and extroverts, risk takers and risk averse, travellers and homebodies, sports and epicureans.

Three and a half years on, I've reached the stage where I actually have to turn contracts down. It's never easy – and sometimes I say yes when it should be a no – but I try to make sure I'm spending quality time with my partner, my children and on my work.

Maintaining a healthy balance between the three is my ultimate goal while but I also want to leave a little room to satisfy my appetite for going kayaking and taking part in marathon running and triathlons. In fact, I met my partner when she picked me up and carried me to the first aid tent at an Ironman triathlon and it's still an important shared passion.

And with more control over my working hours, I'm also able to study part time for an MA in English literature. I'm already halfway through and I'm currently planning my 15,000 word dissertation on Dickens and the railways.

Buying a Business Doctors franchise has allowed me to broaden my horizons and enjoy a much higher quality of life while still turning over six figures. And with its top-notch training programme, sociable company culture and ability to give people the freedom that comes with self-employment, it really should be available on prescription. ♦

