



Transcript: Caroline - property management

Could you tell me what your current position is?

I am a communications director for a very small international property company which basically is run by my husband, my son and myself but of course we do have a small team to work with us. We have a PA and we have a part time handy person, gardener and we have quite a large number of sub-contractors who will do various work for us and we also have business partners, one in Europe and one in America.

Please could you tell me what your job involves?

Erm, it's largely an office based job. I write a lot of letters, make a lot of phone calls. I do some basic bookkeeping, keeping track of expenses. If we're refurbishing a cottage for example we need to know how much we're spending on the kitchen, put everything in. We also have a small rental portfolio so quite a lot of my time is spent interviewing tenants, dealing with payment plans. If a tenant is falling behind it's typically because there is some genuine reason. I suppose with my background, a literature graduate and someone who is really a people person, I try to understand how they got to this crisis and can we together find a solution so we work out some kind of manageable payment plan for them. I also quite enjoy but seldom get the chance to put on overalls and go and pull wallpaper off or pull nettles out of the garden or whatever. When our company first started I was doing quite a lot of that hands on work, that was about four years ago but as the company has grown my role has become much more office based.

Can I ask you though did you establish that business with your husband?

Yes we started it from scratch, yes. Prior to that we had dabbled in property as a sideline while I was teaching and while he was working in his media business and when our son graduated from university and decided not to continue with academia although you know there were bright lights beckoning him he thought 'no, no this is not what I want to do'. He and the two of us decided that we would start a property company, a private limited company and see how we got on.

How did you go about that?

We tried to get lots of advice but much of the advice that we were given was not entirely what we were looking for because it was quite an unusual kind of thing. However we formed a very helpful relationship with the bank manager who my husband knew from a business networking breakfast club that he used to go to from his media company so we asked lots of questions, we did lots of networking, masses of reading. My husband and my son who are both very computer literate spent some time on property forums on the computer just to pick people's brains and we looked for old properties to refurbish and gradually, gradually it grew. Quite a roller coaster, some terrifying moments and even now the company, the company will be five years old at the end of this year and I would say that it still is a roller coaster but it's quite fun. We quite enjoy it.