STORY 3 - QUARTER 4, 2022

MY JOURNEY TO SELF EMPLOYMENT

Margaret Routledge, Design at Eight

Please introduce yourself and your business...
My name is Margaret Routledge, an Interior Designed based in Balla, Co. Mayo, and I operate as Design at Eight.
I have always been interested in interior design, I love the challenge of re-creating a space for the client to love, undertaking the design project from concept to completion, and in the meantime building a trusting relationship with the client.

A number of years ago I worked as a Visual Merchandiser creating room sets in the retail sector, A customer approached me asking me to visit her house for advice on how to design her living room, I was reluctant but agreed, and I worked with her to achieve the look she wanted, Two weeks later her friend booked me and it grew from there. Even in times of social media consumption, I feel personal recommendations and word of mouth is very valuable and I love the fact that my business grew organically.

Why did you decide to go into self employment?
For ten years I worked in the corporate world as a buyer. However, after becoming a parent I wanted more flexibility for family life, and made the very brave and tough decision to simply walk away from my career.

Afterwards I worked as a Visual Merchandiser for three years, even though I chose to work part time, I still found flexibility difficult, so I bit the bullet, jumped ship opting for self employment. I have always wanted to be my own boss. Even though it was very daunting in the beginning, it was definitely worth the effort, I get to enjoy my business growing but working it around my family life.

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What is your business and main achievements to date?
My business is in interior design, primarily working on residential projects with clients in Mayo, Sligo, and Galway. My company name is Design at Eight which was established in 2019,

I wanted to make my title as a designer official, so for three years I studied for my Diploma in Interior Design with the Interior Design Academy of Ireland (IDAI).

The business had humble beginnings, starting off with me working at a small desk in the corner of a bedroom, but as my business grew, I invested in a purpose-built office. In March 2022, I moved into my new office, which was on my wish list for a long time and it is absolutely wonderful to have a separate dedicated work space.

What supports did you get to assist you with your self employment?
Unfortunately, I didn't qualify for any financial supports. However, I completed a start your own business training programme which I found very helpful. I was assigned a mentor to help me through my business plan, which really made me examine all aspects of my business.

It was very beneficial to discuss these details with a professional and action accordingly. When I was ready to invest in my new office, the first person I contacted was Breda in South West Mayo Development Company for advice.

As always the information and advice given was second to none and so supportive. While I love working on my own it's wonderful to know that people from organisations like South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDC) and Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Mayo are always at the other end of the phone to offer support and mentoring.

GET IN TOUCH...

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