



“If it’s your ambition to start up your own business, you should definitely go for it but don’t fly blind – you need a good navigator and Business Link is the best at helping you steer your way through setting up on your own.”

Allan Bulwich, Hot Coffee Photography, Wetwang, July 2009

Who Wants to be a Millionaire? Winner phones a friend at **Business Link**

When Allan Bulwich got the call to say he was on hit ITV show, Who Wants to be a Millionaire? He didn’t need to use a lifeline to make the decision to appear. At the time, the former East Yorkshire account manager had recently heard that he was to be made redundant from his £40,000 a year job and he and his wife, who is recovering from ME, were facing homelessness.

Allan knew that he had to win big, not only to keep a roof over his family’s heads but also to keep his dream alive of starting his own business.

The 34-year-old, based in Wetwang in East Yorkshire won a total of £50,000 after answering “What is the name of the building where the Friends meet?” Allan says: “I knew as soon as it came up that the answer was meeting house but when assembly house came up it made me doubt my intuition. The audience had got the previous question wrong leading to the contestant losing £49,000 so I had no faith in them so I went 50-50 but it left the two I thought it could be!

Eventually I went with the audience and they agreed that meeting house was the answer.”

Allan was thrilled to walk away with £50,000 on the day and it has since given him the ability to begin his own company and follow his long-standing passion for photography.

His new business, Hot Coffee Photography, was born with the financial help received from Who Wants to be a Millionaire? and the advice Allan received from Business Link Yorkshire.

Allan spoke to Business Link adviser, Neale Lucas who helped him crystallise his ideas by helping him develop a business plan. Neale was impressed by Allan’s drive: “Allan is an inspirational example of someone turning a disadvantage to his advantage and changing his life pattern. Turning a hobby or talent into a business is a great way to self-employment. Allan has outstanding determination which is needed if a business is to succeed. He has benefited immensely from one-to-one sessions with experts.”

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Following a meeting with his adviser, Allan attended a meeting with a designer set up by Business Link. This helped Allan develop the Hot Coffee Photography company logo and its branding. He says: "Business Link's advice on creating a business plan really helped and the availability of real solid expert advice on marketing throughout the year has been brilliant."

"The next step is capitalising on the foundations that I've build and starting to make a profit. I've put some of our winnings into the business and bought a second car to help get from client to client. I believe my success is due to the quality of my photographs and that's because I find it easy to make people relax in front of the camera. I want people to enjoy the experience and then to fall in love with the pictures."

The Who Wants to be a Millionaire? experience was key in many ways to the development of the business. "During filming in the TV studio I was under immense pressure because I knew I had to win some big money, so when I was the quickest in 'the fastest finger' I went completely over the

top. Chris Tarrant took the mickey out of me but it was worth it", says Allan. "I truly understand the value of seizing the moment which has stood me in good stead with the development of my business."

Under the guidance of Business Link, he has formed partnerships with hotels and beauticians and created a comprehensive website at hotcoffeephotography.com.

Allan's website is now complete and he has already taken on portrait assignments all over the north of England. He has worked at corporate and charity events and has had wedding bookings as far afield as Scotland and Spain.

Allan advises others who are keen to set up their own business to seek help from Business Link; "If it's your ambition to start up your own business, you should definitely go for it but don't fly blind – you need a good navigator and Business Link is the best at helping you steer your way through setting up on your own."

NB: All case studies have been signed off by the subject and Business Link Yorkshire. All details are accurate at the time of publication, but please check with Business Link's PR team before using this case study, as details may have changed.

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