

# How Did I Get Here?

Fast-talking and energetic, **Lesley Anne Rubenstein** has left her life in Israel to come to Kent to be the Director of the brand new **Canterbury Enterprise Hub**. She served in the Israeli Air Force as an electronics technician, has two Masters degrees in Medical Sciences and in Management, and set up Israel's first ever Enterprise Hub.

**B**orn in Manchester, she grew up in a traditional Jewish neighbourhood in Salford, the fifth of six children. When she was 13 her parents decided to emigrate, moving to Beer-Sheva, the largest town in the Southern Negev desert, one-and-a-quarter hours from the commercial capital, Tel Aviv, in Israel.

"It's so very different from Kent. When I looked out the window of my office in Israel, I could see all the shades of brown to beige, not to mention the camels, whereas here, it's all green, stretches of woodland and trees, lots of ducks, squirrels and rabbits. I knew it would be very different coming over here, but never envisaged it to be quite like this. Walking from the car park every morning, I'm struck at how lovely it all is, like working in a big park.

"During my Master's I was supporting myself, working as a teaching assistant to biology undergraduates and as a research assistant in the intensive coronary care unit at the local hospital. I was also the liaison officer to the Board of Governors on behalf of the Student Association. Of all my roles, I enjoyed the latter the most, as it entailed a lot of PR and marketing. It was ironic that I had been writing the student annual report and, among other things, had periodically pointed out how there was a brain-drain and most of our students had to leave the area to find work, yet it never occurred to me that my situation would be the same once I completed my Medical Science degree. I suddenly found myself without a job!

"14 years ago there wasn't much going on in the Negev. We had heavy industry, a university and a hospital that had more births than any other in Israel – but that was about it. Over 90% of our graduates were leaving the area to find jobs elsewhere, mainly in the centre of Israel, and I was going to join them. I didn't want to spend the rest of my life in a laboratory testing urine and blood and, without a PhD degree, there wasn't much else on the job front.

"We needed a business Enterprise Hub. It was my involvement with the Board of Governors that led to me setting up a Hub for entrepreneurs, seeded by philanthropic funds from American friends of the university. At the time I didn't know what a Hub was, or indeed, what an entrepreneur was, but I was told that it would help create jobs in the area. So the PhD idea was happily binned and, instead, I found myself establishing and running the Hub.

"We started off in 1990 as a mixed Hub, facilitating start-ups from bakeries to friction welding machines and smart cards, under the umbrella of a non-profit organisation. We were partially funded by the Israel Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), together with Jewish Agency funds. In 1996 the OCS requested that we focus on hi-tech only, or they threatened to pull their funds, and that was how we became one of Israel's fully government-backed Hubs for hi-tech start-ups. 50% of our clients

were immigrants from the Soviet Block, and it was difficult instilling Western thinking into their Eastern mentality. They had never had to think about market needs before – they had been paid to do a job regardless of whether anyone needed that particular widget.

"In 1997, mainly for tax reasons, we opened a wholly-owned 'limited by guarantee' company. When the OCS suggested that a pilot of 10 incubators be privatised under certain restrictions, we decided to go for it. We courted several bidders and eventually settled for a group made up of business people, a computing solutions provider company and the head of a venture capital group, who chaired the new Board of Directors. The old Board moved back to the charity and the new Board took over the limited-by-guarantee and turned it into a limited company. It was fun (and nerve-racking at first) to have a Board comprising business people; the decision-making process was more business-like and their networks were invaluable. There was a \$2.24 million infusion which was to fund the Hub infrastructure over the next three years and the remainder was to be invested, together with government grants, into the client companies so that the clients received between \$400k-500k over two years. Post-privatisation we were attracting the *crème de la crème* of hi-tech start-ups and I was in my element. I must admit to missing working with that particular Board and the clients. It felt like a finishing school; I learnt so much that year.

"The privatisation process took about a year to complete, from start to finish, and after that I stayed on for almost another year but felt that it was time to move on. England was my natural choice as I have family over here and it isn't too far from Israel. Once I made my decision to move here, everything magically seemed to fall into place. The new Director role for the Canterbury Enterprise Hub was posted and I applied.

"The first interview was via videoconference, and it was hilarious because the connection was faulty at first and it kept connecting and disconnecting so I could hear the panel laughing and then going quiet. Apparently just before it connected someone told a joke and thereafter they tried to put on a serious face before the connection held fast. They didn't know that I could hear them – and I was thankful because they sounded human and not stuffy British academic stereotypes one sees in the movies, so I was relatively relaxed by the time the interview began.

"And the rest, as they say, is history. I'm here now and it's funny after 30 years in the desert. For me it's like going back 14 years to when we established the Hub in Beer-Sheva. Back then there was very little in the way of hi-tech companies and East Kent's situation is reminiscent. It's challenging and exciting to start over from scratch and it's going to take a lot of teamwork to get this project up and rolling. Being backed by the University of Kent, Canterbury City Council and of course SEEDA, will certainly make this role easier and will surely remove many of the hurdles that we will face. I don't doubt for a second that we'll be successful and the move over here will prove to have been more than worth it."

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# A FINE BALANCE

Long working hours can take their toll when starting and running a new business. Whether you walk the dog, pick the kids up from school or take the day off, make sure the balance is right for you. Here, members of three Hub companies discuss the changes they have made in their lives.

**W**ork-life balance: it includes mental, spiritual, physical and social aspects of life; it's on the Government's agenda, currently making its way into legislation. And it is also becoming a big issue for large employers. But who is it for? Is it a concept just for women who work both inside and outside the home? Or for any parent or carer wanting to spend more time with the family? Is it only for employees seeking to have their needs recognised in a busy corporate environment? Or is it relevant to the single, the childless, the self-employed and the entrepreneur? Of course it is for everyone, but not everyone needs the same balance - and then it is very different for the entrepreneur than for the employee.

One of the reasons people give for leaving corporate life is work-related stress. The dream is that life will be less stressful running your own business, but you may be swapping office politics and lack of control for long, lonely hours and financial headaches. What is common to both being employed and self-employed, though, is the need to have the control over working time - time sovereignty - that leads to greater job satisfaction and less stress. Stress damages your performance and consequently your business.

Working very long hours can be deeply rewarding, but people may be deluding themselves if that is all there is in their lives. Of course it can be time limited: if the sacrifice is for a short time, it could be worth it. But an entrepreneur may be so driven to succeed that they will give low priority to their own physical and mental health, never admitting they have problems switching off and so putting stress on their personal relationships.

Achim Hoffman of Woxon Ltd, at Sittingbourne Hub, is developing a physical water disinfection process that

will give us swimming pools without chlorine. He is working alone now, having gone through the corporate mill as a management consultant, but being self-employed has always been part of his ambition: "I knew about 10 years ago that I wanted to run my own business. I was a chemical engineer with no business skills, so I did an MBA and then went into management consulting to gain the practical skills to prepare me for the entrepreneurial side."

Achim, in his mid-30s, says he now works about the same hours he did in consulting, about 65 per week, getting home often as late as 10pm, but he is constantly thinking about the business and never really cuts off from it. "I don't think work-life balance (WLB) really applies to entrepreneurs," he says. "Most of them live their work because it's what they enjoy. The idea that work is something you do so you can make enough money to have your real life doesn't work for me. Sometimes it's frustrating, but I absolutely love what I do."

How frustrating, though, is it being the partner of someone with this sort of single-mindedness? A supportive partner who shares your dream and your attitude to work and life could be one of your best assets, but people's needs change as they get older, especially when the time to start a family approaches. So what about their WLB?

Achim and his wife Anne moved to Kent from London for a better lifestyle. She still commutes but has made changes to her WLB by moving to a different job where she has more control of her schedule. Achim says she is a great motivator. "She tells me to get going! Also, I couldn't do what I am doing now without her well-paid job," he admits. "I'll need at least another two years before I'm sure that my business is stable enough - this is a very new product. Having children is on the horizon; the only thing holding us back is my income." Anne's dream is to quit the rat race too and run a horse stable.



"What is common to both being employed and self-employed though, is the need to have the control over working time - time sovereignty - that leads to greater job satisfaction and less stress."



The Hoffmans rarely take holidays, apart from occasional long weekends, and there's not much time during the week for socialising. For him, weekends are spent on the golf course. If there is work to be done in the lab, he starts at 5am and then plays golf. "It keeps me sane," he says. He is probably right - something that business coaches agree on is the importance of scheduling regular breaks away from the office for exercise or socialising.

As an entrepreneur, the awareness of what motivates you, your driving force, is key in understanding your own need for balance. For Achim, who says he is very happy with his lifestyle now and will always be an entrepreneur, autonomy is extremely important - that the feeling of achievement that comes from creating something from nothing.

Coach Penny Lock thinks that it is as important when starting out to have an idea of your WLB priorities as it is to know where you want to be located and where your finance is coming from. "If people know what their motivators in life are, they can see if their work fits that," she explains. "These could be material - house, car, possessions - but as people get older they may want more meaning from life. By their late 30s or early 40s they are starting to look more critically at their needs. Is it about power, status, achievement or relationships in and out of work?"

Dominique Oliver of Resource Productions, who makes community group video projects and is located at the Slough Hub, is clear about what motivates her: "In terms of income, I could get any job in the Arts, but now the reward is the job satisfaction, the people I work with, and the fact that I decide what to take on and how to develop. I've already decided the enjoyment is more important than the money."

However, she has not escaped the 'feast or famine' fears that plague many young entrepreneurs, leading them to pack just that bit too much into their diary just in case the next contract is slow in arriving. Financial security is a strong driver. "I constantly worry," she says, "but it's getting easier. My partner says it's always like this: one day I'll have several thousand pounds, and then for a month I'll have minus something, then straight away it'll be back up again."

She admits that her life is currently nothing but work and very intense. "My day could be made up of school-time workshops, freelance work with other production companies, paperwork, an after-school club or a workshop at a youth centre, then more paperwork. Thinking time is pretty much in my sleep! I have tried to move away from working at weekends, though."

Dominique is hoping the pressure on her time will ease now she has taken on a video production assistant. "It wasn't hard to find the right person in terms of skills, as I've had students working for me in the summer holidays and on work experience," she says. "The hardest part is planning what work I'm doing and what work they will take on. Having worked with freelancers helps because you get an idea of your own strengths and their areas of expertise."

This is a stage when different WLB issues arise: having been sucked into working 18-hour days and doing all the work yourself, delegating responsibility can feel like handing your baby over to a stranger, and may not come naturally however desperately you need more

time for yourself. Consolidating your business takes a different set of skills to starting up.

John Worth realised he had reached a crisis point with his WLB about four years ago, when his company Worth Media, in Brighton, had grown to around 50 employees. He was absolutely exhausted because his energy and belief in his vision for the business meant he had a very flat management structure: everyone was equal and he had no-one to delegate to. He couldn't effectively communicate with everybody and was eroding a lot of the value in the company.

"I recognised that I needed to step back, say 'you're in charge now' and allow it to be less about chasing my five-year vision and more about valuing the experience and skills of our people," he explains. "And then I learned that I still needed to be out there inspiring clients."

It wasn't a smooth journey. It took two years for him to find the right balance by identifying individuals from within the organisation who could grow into positions where they were running the business, and it only worked through a process of trust. Now, with less than half the number of employees, efficiency has improved ten-fold, revenues have been maintained (disproving the fears of many SMEs that progressive policies would cost too much), and Worth's WLB is enviable.

By consciously pulling back from total control in the office to concentrate on the creative side, Worth now has time to take his children, now 10, eight and four, to and from school, he participates in their activities, walks the dog for hours on the Downs, and can work from home in the middle of the day or, sometimes, not at all. "In a way, it's all work time because I'm always thinking; it's creative time and time for reflection," he says.

Technology has made working from home one way of adjusting your WLB, but it can be a mixed blessing. Although his staff have flexible hours and can work from home, John has become less enthusiastic about virtual working. "People working at home need to be kept in the loop. Communication, personal contact and trust building are fundamental to successful working; and home working can oppose team spirit."

Ginny Smith, who coaches managers, says: "There are different issues around working at home. When the children come tumbling in from school they can interrupt work. Women may feel they must be available to everyone just because they are there. Drawing the boundaries between work and home life can be a major stressor." For instance, if you are working from home and your partner still works in a corporate environment, would they expect you to do household chores during your breaks in the week so as to leave weekends free?

"In theory you are more in control of your life," says Ginny. "Many people appreciate being able to make their own rules: not worrying about dress codes or taking a couple of hours off without worrying what the rest of the office thinks. It's about choice."

The payback for working long hours in your own business is the knowledge that you are investing in your future by building a resource for yourself and your family. But remember, nobody ever reached middle age and said they wished they had spent less time with the children and more on the business.

## TEN TIPS FOR TIME SOVEREIGNTY

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| <b>01</b><br>Keep a time management log; say for two weeks at hourly intervals, and don't rely on memory. | <b>02</b><br>Spend 10 minutes every morning planning your day.                        |
| <b>03</b><br>Do the challenging 'think pieces' when you are feeling at your most energetic.               | <b>04</b><br>Put your tasks in an order where completing one will help with the next. |
| <b>05</b><br>Try to ration time for each task.  | <b>06</b><br>Diarrise breaks for exercise etc, and take them.                         |
| <b>07</b><br>Don't prevaricate by doing non-essential but appealing tasks first.                          | <b>08</b><br>Aim to complete high-priority tasks even if you don't like them.         |
| <b>09</b><br>Perfectionism is an enemy, your work has to be good but not perfect.                         | <b>10</b><br>Learn to say NO.   |

## LOOKING FOR HELP: BUSINESS COACHING V MENTORING.

**Mentoring:** It's a good idea to share problems and possible solutions with others who are going through, or have been through, similar situations. It's free and eventually you may be able to help others in return. It can be a lonely life when you're starting up, so talk things over confidentially with someone impartial and who wants you to succeed. They could offer help in new areas such as taking on your first employee, or give advice as to where to network locally. Your Hub is a good place to start.

**Business coaching:** Not cheap but could be very useful in offering rapid solutions by identifying problems quickly. Coaches may challenge limiting beliefs; they listen, reflect and analyse the situation in order to work on goals with a client. They often use the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, a self-report questionnaire identifying individual preferences, strengths and weaknesses, and personality types which could lead to disharmony between working partners who have opposite, but equally valid, approaches to work.

ALSO SEE The Magic of Mentoring article on page 4

## A revolution at work

One company pushing for businesses to get the balance right is Eve-olution, based at the Surrey Hub. "Enlightened organisations and certain sections of the public sector have become increasingly concerned about the long hours working culture in the UK", says Managing Director Tracey Carr. "Much research has demonstrated a link between productivity and hours spent at the desk. In the UK we currently have the longest working hours in Europe and the lowest productivity."

Eve-olution recently completed a research project on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Service looking into the needs of part time and flexible workers, a project supported and endorsed by Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State.

"Our project looked into work-life balance for all police including senior operational staff. It is obviously imperative that the police are effective and alert, which is impossible if you are tired from working long hours," says Tracey. "As the CEO of a small business, I am fully aware of the detrimental effects of working 24/7. My best work is done when I am relaxed and refreshed."

## Eve-olution



Tracey Carr started the company in 2001 following the breakdown of her marriage. She wanted and needed to find different ways of working that facilitated both her responsibilities as a parent of three small children and her career.

The company's primary focus is to assist organisations in the transition from a male dominated long hours culture to more inclusive and flexible way of working. They offer a range of workshops and recent clients include Barclays Bank and the Metropolitan. Eve-olution Limited 100 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HP 020 7321 5590 www.eve-olution.net info@eve-olution.net

# FUNDING THE FUTURE

How one company raised £1.5 million through Business Angel and Venture Capital Support.

Arieso

## Company Profile

### Overview:

Arieso Ltd is a young telecommunications company making a big splash in the world of mobile phone network technology with its 3G network software.

### Origins:

The brainchild of CEO Shirin Dehghan, an electronics graduate and entrepreneur, who set out with an idea for 'super software' that had the speed and mathematical power to galvanise networks and smooth the transition from 2G to 3G technology.

### Pedigree:

Shirin already had a burgeoning reputation in the world of 3G technology from her time at Vodafone. An increasing array of industry heavyweights are now on board, including ex-Vodafone founder director Mike Pinches.

### Achievements:

With the support of the Newbury Hub and the Oxfordshire Investment Opportunity Network (OION) the company has recently secured £1.5 million funding from Venture Capitalists Top Technology Ventures and Add Partners. Key products, including Altaro, being trialled by the major network operators.

### Future:

Arieso's software is set to make a real impression, using highly specialised algorithms and parallel processing to make networks faster and more effective. Arieso expect its tools to save clients 30% on capital and operating costs. When you consider it costs between £100 million and £1 billion to build a 3G network in the UK, you can begin to appreciate the appeal of the products to network operators.

### Shirin Dehghan says:

"I want the company to have a £5-6 million turnover within five-six years."

All start-up companies need backing, but who is going to provide the funds to get your ground breaking product into the market place? If you're a small retail business, perhaps the usual methods of loans such as re-mortgaging the house or using personal savings will cover the costs, but if you're a technology company looking to deliver cutting edge products you'll need a different level of finance to develop your business. This is where Business Angels and Venture Capitalists come in. Venture Capitalists look to invest money in new enterprises, but they do so with a view to making a profit on their investment and they won't start signing cheques until you make a strong business case. Business Angels fulfil a similar role, but can move a little faster and more flexibly, although generally with a smaller scale of investment.

Arieso is an example of what Venture Capital can offer an emerging young business. But the company's success in securing £1.5 million in funds from VCs is the result of persistence and determination, and was by no means straightforward even for a company with impressive credentials and a quality product to offer. VCs use a process they call 'due diligence' to assess risk levels, and in Arieso's

**"There are more variables for building a perfect 3G network than there are atoms in the universe."**  
**Jim Trotter, Arieso**

case its progress was followed closely by the VCs for 12-18 months before they were awarded the grants.

CEO Shirin Dehghan first had to prove the potential of the company's products through trials, and until this happened the VCs deemed any investment to be too risky. Crucially, through, being part of the Newbury Enterprise Hub, Arieso was put in contact with OION, Europe's leading Business Angel network. OION specialise in helping young technology firms to secure grants in the £500 thousand to £2 million bracket, and it was at one of OION's monthly meetings that Arieso's presentation attracted a £500 thousand commitment from Top Technology Ventures, which in turn leveraged a further £1 million from Add Partners.

Shirin was quick to acknowledge the value of having the help of both the Newbury Enterprise Hub and OION, underlining the value of a support structure and contacts for any new business. A quality team of proven business performers also helped their cause. As John Cox, Manager of OION, said: "Arieso has both a strong executive and non-executive team. Having people of that calibre ticks a major box for investors."

As a new business, particularly in the field of new technology, it is worth remembering that most investors do not have more than a general knowledge of your area of expertise. Therefore it is important not to blind investors with science or have them reaching for the jargon busting dictionary. OION help companies in this area by offering a 'dry run panel' so that companies can make a practice presentation in front of a panel, to fine tune their pitch to suit their potential investors.

Arieso's Business Development and Research Consultant, Jim Trotter, believes that young businesses should also be prepared for possible difficult negotiation periods, and have to be prepared to compromise when negotiating with VCs. He also warns that tenacity is essential, pointing out that Shirin worked extremely hard for two years and made great sacrifices before finally securing funds. He suggests: "Persistence is very important, as is having healthy relationships with a number of investors."

Above all, it is important for businesses to do their research and pick the right VC firm for their needs. Different VCs specialise in different areas and selecting one that understands your business is crucial. It also helps to have a support and contact network like that at Arieso. It was the company's hot desking arrangement at the Newbury Hub that led directly to its contact with OION, through Hub Director Ed Cooper. In turn this led to the meeting that secured the crucial first investment from Top Technology Ventures.

### What is 3G?

Essentially, 3G is the future of everyday communications. It is the technology that drives the newest, cutting edge mobile phones, which offer video technology and fast and wide ranging access to several several voice, data and video services at any time.

