

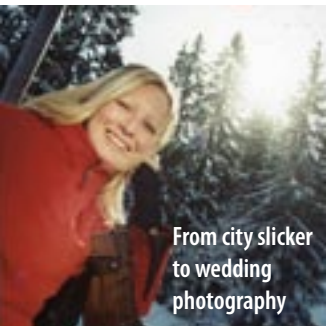
Up, up and AWAY

HOW TO BEAT THE DOWNTURN

Recession can be a time of opportunity – if you're prepared to take some career risks. Jamie Oliver meets the women who are doing just that. Photographs by Magali Delporte and Sarah Dunn

SWAPPED THE CITY FOR A LIFE BEHIND THE LENS

Lisa Griffin, 34, is a photographer working between the UK and France



From city slicker to wedding photography

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little afraid that I have chosen these hard economic times to try to go it alone. But there's more to life than money and I know that I would

always regret it if I didn't try.

I worked in the City for 12 years. I was a collateral manager on the stockmarket for Deutsche Bank and Morgan Stanley.

The City was very seductive, very glamorous. By the time I was 23, I was getting annual bonuses of £15k-£20k. It was all lunches, functions, clothes shopping and having my hair done. I'm glad I'm not there now, not because I didn't enjoy it, but because I always thought there was more to life.

I started doing wedding photography for friends, then the odd christening

and it went from there. I'm now based in France and London and do wedding photography mainly for English people getting married abroad.

Prepare for your new career. Do as much research as you can. I did a two-year evening-school photography course before I left my job in the City.

People will continue to get married abroad, despite the economic situation, because a wedding is such a massive once-in-a-lifetime thing to do. But I'm not complacent. I'm always looking at new marketing strategies and offer discounts on various packages to encourage people to keep booking.

I also do interiors, landscapes and portraits. Some of my landscapes are now hanging on the walls of restaurants and ski chalets where I live in France. I've learned it is important to be versatile and offer what the client wants; now more than ever.

In many ways I have more job security – at least now I can't be sacked.

LISA'S NO 1 TIP

Try to stay motivated. In hard times it's easy to have doubts and low moments. I keep myself going with inspirational books and websites, and by attending seminars and galleries.



As business grows, Claire hopes to support more eco projects

OUT OF THE WOODS

Claire Russell, 29, gave up her job in insurance to launch green website Click4Carbon

Our main aim is to raise money to help forestation projects in Asia. As the business grows, we hope to support a range of environmental projects.

If we had 100,000 searches a day, we could plant 50,000 trees a year. Revenue from online advertising on the search engine is given to the Plant A Tree Today Foundation to invest in reforestation projects in Asia.

The economic downturn provides opportunities because our business is about keeping costs down and reducing environmental impact.

Have faith in your convictions. My family thought it was lunacy to leave a fairly safe job in insurance to start this business, but I think a strong business idea will survive in a downturn.

We're not reliant on suppliers so don't have to worry about them going out of business. And because we're as self-sufficient as we can be, that also helps us to keep costs down.

We practise what we preach. I cycle. I don't have a driving licence.

Most of us are guilty of excess. Look at what you throw away and waste your money on. Becoming aware of that is the first step towards making changes.

I believe there is no one route to success. It's not just about money. It's all well and good earning a big salary but if you never see your friends and family, what sort of success is that? ►

CLAIRE'S NO 1 TIP

Don't underestimate how much work is involved. I often work evenings and weekends, but my work/life balance is better.

HEADSTART TO HAPPINESS

Celebrity hairdresser Tara Smith, 36, launched her range of organic hair products last summer

Just as I launched my range, my main manufacturer went bust. I could have been an ostrich, but I stood tall and faced the problem head on. I contacted my suppliers, service providers, everybody I was going to owe money to and said, 'You know what? Your cheque is not in the post and it won't be for eight weeks. But please bear with me because it will come.' I got respect for doing that.

You need to be honest and never string people along as it'll catch up eventually and then the trust is gone. It's really important not to burn your bridges.

When times are hard, you need to pull out all the stops to keep an emergent business going. Keep people in the loop, and explore every single option that comes your way.

Shout about your business, don't wait for people to stumble across it themselves, and work your arse off.

The media is making everyone petrified about the economy. It's ridiculous. But we had become greedy and it is now time for people to think about how much they are spending, and what they are spending it on.

When I managed to get my products into shops like Tesco or Asda, it would have been easy to sit back and celebrate. But I'm not going to run before I can walk. I won't be drawing a salary for at least two years.

People wonder why I'm busy trying to get my products into other shops, but there's always room for them.

In ten years, I believe a company such as Procter & Gamble will buy the business – and that's because I'll have worked bloody hard at creating a great brand and range of products.

I'm an opportunist and I try to turn every situation to my advantage and to the advantage of the business.

Organic is an important lifestyle choice for me, something I strongly believe everybody should be opting for



Tara aims to turn any opportunity into an advantage for her business

TARA'S NO 1 TIP

Everything you do, give 100 per cent – give everything you can. You don't want to look back and think you could've tried harder.

– that's why my products are organic and cost under a fiver.

I was horrified to learn that organic farmers in Guatemala aren't paid enough to live in decent housing, so I helped build houses for them. They don't supply anything for our products, but I wanted to help. I can find myself in some pretty glam locations but doing stuff like that is a reality check and that

is important. It also helps to put the economic difficulties we are facing in the UK into perspective.

I used to do Oprah Winfrey's PA's hair. She told me that not one single cheque went out without Oprah signing it off. That's my approach to doing business. I go through all expenditure with a fine-tooth comb – if something's five pence, I want to know why it isn't two pence.

I hope that the global recession will create unity and a coming together of people. In the future, I think we all need to become a little more selfless.

The best advice I ever had was from my dad. He told me to always remember that tomorrow is another day. He said, 'You wake up, be grateful. You're healthy, be grateful. If you have a crap day, don't worry, tomorrow will be better.'

Find Tara's products at tarasmith.com ►



Sháa loves that the internet gives women freedom to get career advice

TOP TACTICS FOR SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION

Show what you're capable of, says John M McKee, author of *Career Wisdom: 101 Proven Strategies to Ensure Workplace Success*

1 DEVELOP A LIFT SPEECH

Opportunities to make a great impression come unexpectedly, such as in a lift. Take advantage of any fortuitous meetings by having a speech ready – develop and memorise two or three sentences.

2 OVER-COMMUNICATE

The more people who know you, and are aware of your projects, the better the chances of your name being suggested when new opportunities arise. Create a regular 'status update' memo to help people keep track of what you are planning or currently working on.

3 SHARE CREDIT, SHINE BRIGHTER

No one likes a 'glory hog'. One of the fastest ways for a subordinate to become disliked and disrespected is by taking sole recognition for a team effort. Mention those who have helped create successes. Sharing accolades will ultimately further your future success.

4 LOOK THE PART

Many decision makers still associate appearance, demeanor and speech with overall ability. Have the best posture, speak in a confident and authoritative manner, and dress for success.

5 ARRIVE RESTED AND PREPARED

The more rested and informed you are, the more likely you are to be seen as the best one to perform what's needed.

6 TOSS THE TECH

Communicating in person where possible, rather than over email, is imperative for success-seekers, no matter how intimidating your boss/client may be.

SHE MEANS BUSINESS Sháa Wasmund, 36, runs small business advice website smarta.com, which launched in January 2009

We all have opportunities in life but not everyone recognises them. I'm always on the lookout for them and if I see one, I grab it. I don't care if it's a risk, or I end up looking stupid. Life's too short. **In a way, there couldn't be a better time to launch a business that supports small firms.** They need all the help they can get. **The biggest problem small firms face** is not knowing their limitations until it's too late. But they can learn from their peers and not make the same mistakes. **Twice as many women run businesses in the US as in the UK.** It's crazy. **Women are the best multi-taskers.** They have to be – and it will remain so for the foreseeable future. **I used to work for James Dyson.** Even

SHAA'S NO 1 TIP

Think big, not small. It takes just as long to do both, so go big.

though I was much younger than him, I saw him as an equal. When you do that, people treat you as an equal. **To steal a line from Nike,** my advice is just do it. What do you have to lose? **The internet is wonderful.** Women no longer have to approach some middle-class white man for business advice. **Most entrepreneurs are resilient and honest.** Entrepreneurs are happy to fail, as long as it's fast, so they can move on. **Cash flow is a small firm's main concern.** A supplier could go bust and cause ten other companies to get into problems. **Small firms need an open dialogue with their bank** – and with a real person. If you can't speak to a person, complain. **The credit crunch hit our first round of funding.** But we were lucky and had a wide range of supporters to fall back on. **When you can galvanise people to work in one direction** you have a much greater chance of success than if you're doing it alone. That's why Obama has a great chance to really make a difference. ■

