



### **From textiles teacher to entrepreneur**

Her orchestra is sewing machines, her players a cast of people learning how to stitch. Surrounded by bolts of fabrics and reels of thread, Rachel Concannon conducts her studio and shop like a maestro.

After 17 years at Jersey College for Girls, the former textiles teacher was ready for change. Rachel secured the island dealership for Janome sewing machines, the ones she had used at school, and wanted to continue teaching sewing skills – only this time to adults. After deciding to set up her own business, Rachel got in touch with Jersey Business for advice.

### **Jersey Business's crucial support**

Jersey Business was able to help Rachel create a business plan, looking at what she could sell, and how profitable it could be. Once Rachel worked out that the business would be 80% teaching and 20% merchandise, she was able to look for premises, getting Jersey Business on board to help negotiate a favourable lease.

“Jersey Business has been really helpful right from the start,” Rachel said. “I was lucky to find the perfect premises and was keen to go ahead. Nick came to look at the site with me and could see the potential. Jersey Business helped me negotiate better terms for the lease.

“Nick helped me believe that I could set up this business. He talked me through the business plan, forecasting how much money I could make, looking at all the things I could do to make the business more profitable. He gave me ideas for the potential for the business.”

Nick Steel, Head of Business Advisory Team at Jersey Business, said: “We helped Rachel write a three year plan. Our role was to help her work out what it would realistically cost to run the business, and what she could realistically make, to know whether it was viable.

“A good financial plan involves looking at all the potential costs versus what you can sell for the first year, and ensuring that the numbers are robust before factoring inflation and incremental costs and projecting what costs and income should be for years two and three.

“It doesn’t matter if you are starting a new business or expanding an existing business, you still have to go through the process of planning and understanding the financial situation before you can take anything forwards.”

### **Rachel's successful launch**

Rachel got everything in place and launched her shop and studio in June 2014, shortly before leaving her teaching position. Just over a year later she has built up her client base; running sewing classes for adults, along with classes for older children and even private parties, such as birthday and bride to be parties. As well as selling Janome sewing machines, Rachel sources fabrics, threads, ribbons, haberdashery, very exciting trims and many other materials necessary for crafts and dressmaking, which she sells in her shop.

She said: “I thought the business would be more about art textiles, but found that people were more interested in learning the basic sewing skills. In some cases a whole generation has missed out on learning how to sew, either at school or from their parents, and they now want to learn. Sewing is a good life skill, it’s useful for looking after your clothes, or for making homeware and craft gifts, and it can improve your hand-eye co-ordination too.

“I phone up Jersey Business if I have a problem and they will give me good advice. There are lots of general issues that come up when you first set up a business and it’s very reassuring to know there’s someone you can talk things through with. I know that if I call up with a silly question they will never make me feel stupid.

**“I have so much to do but I’m really happy being here. I keep pinching myself every day because I**

**can't quite believe I'm doing this. It's just magical."**

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## **Relevant Links**

 Rachel's Textiles Email

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 Rachel's Textile Studio Website

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