

'A Day in the Life' of a sole trader (Jewellery Business)

**1) Give a brief description of what you do & the company you work for?**

At school I enjoyed maths, science and art. I have a biochemistry degree and worked for GSK for 13 years as an R&D scientist doing biological mass spectrometry. I've always been creative and did an evening class in jewellery making which led to a change in career. I now run my own business, S Brooks Jewellery, which I started 6 years ago. I make and sell my handmade sterling silver jewellery through my website and market it through social media.

**2) What does your average day entail? Where do you work? (Environment - Office, home, studio etc.) What is your work pattern? (full time/part time etc) What are the main activities during your day? (i.e. meetings, emails, practical tasks, visiting clients etc)**

I don't really have an average day! I'm very flexible and fit my work around family life. My business is just me, so my time is spent doing whatever needs to be done next. I design and make the jewellery, photograph it, build my website and market it online via social media. I also design bespoke pieces of jewellery for my customers. This is usually done via email as my customers are all over the country. I keep my own accounts and records.

**3) What skills and qualification are required for your role?**

You don't need any qualifications although you can study jewellery making at university or through private tuition. You need to be fairly practical and artistic to make and design your own jewellery. It involves cutting intricate designs into the metal with a jewellers saw, soldering, filing and polishing. You need an eye for detail to ensure the jewellery is perfect. You also need to know how to run a business, your legal requirements, accounting, tax returns etc

**4) What do you enjoy most about your job? What are you least favourite aspects of your job?**

I love the creative aspects of my job and the sense of achievement. My customers are lovely and it's a privilege to make personalised pieces of jewellery for people to signify something special to them. The downside of working from home and running my business on my own is that there's always something I could be working on and my customers email and message me any time of day, any day of the week.

**5) What were your favourite subjects at school? Why? Do these link/relate to the job you do now?**

I really enjoyed science at school, particularly biology and chemistry which led to my degree choice and first career. I also enjoyed art and DT at school but was encouraged to pick the more academic subjects for A Level and beyond.

**6) How did you get to where you are now? (i.e. academic routes, professional development, career opportunities)**

I did an evening class in jewellery making to learn the basics and then worked in a jeweller's workshop to gain experience. I worked with other jewellers who were running their own businesses and learned a huge amount. I also attended lots of free courses on running a business, accounting and tax.

**7) What advice would you give to our aspiring students who are interested in pursuing a career in your profession?**

Running your own business is hard work but very rewarding. You have control over business decisions and choose how you want your business to move forward. You need a thick skin to sell something you've created to the public who may turn their nose up or tell you it's too expensive. It's great to be able work doing something you love but when you're self-employed you don't get the financial security that comes with working for a company with a regular wage and benefits. Or being able to leave work a 5 o'clock and forget about it.

**8) In your current profession what are the potential development and progression opportunities?**

The sky is the limit!