

Little, wonky, wiggly toe... is Business!

An interview with Jane Sheehan, UK's leading foot reader

Jane is one of those Minds you would always want to meet in any event; enthusiastic, enterprising and fun! This, however, does not mean she is not serious about her Business. From the beginning she set up clear steps to develop her career and has since then succeeded in many ways.

Reading feet around the world Jane has indeed brought many curious Minds like mine to try to understand better what Holistic Therapy is all about.

With a very warm heart and the usual passion for what she does Jane shares her enterprising story.

“Alan Carr, the comedian, jumped over the sofa, landed next to me and whipped his shoes and socks off...”

What was most difficult for you when you decided to leave your job and start your own business?

I remember when I decided to leave my job. I'd been holding down a full time job at Enercon Industries who make Induction Heat Sealing equipment for the packaging industry and I'd been running my foot reading and reflexology business part-time at evenings and weekends. I'd also started teaching foot reading and it was getting to the stage where something had to change. I didn't want to give up my foot reading and reflexology or my teaching, so it was obvious that I was going to have to resign from my day job. But imagine – I'd spent all my working life earning a monthly salary and all of a sudden I was going to be faced with no monthly salary and living off my own efforts. What if I couldn't earn enough? What if I got sick and couldn't work? I was terrified of making the leap even though it was my passion. So to overcome the fear, I made my decision in November that by the March I would hand in my notice. I didn't tell anyone my decision, but lived the roller coaster of emotions that ensued every time I got a new client, or every time a client cancelled. By February I was so used to it that I decided to hand in my notice earlier than planned! I remember that people I worked with were saying things like “Don't worry, if it doesn't work out, you can always come back!” For me, there was no option of it not working out. I didn't want to come back. I also learned very quickly; don't ask advice from anyone who hasn't already experienced what you are asking about. There were a lot of well meaning people offering me advice about my impending change but only the ones who had done it themselves gave me suitable advice.

I've been working for myself full time since 2005 and over those 8 years I've realised that there are some things I didn't consider sufficiently when I first started?. If you want to get a mortgage, the lending companies look at your profit only rather than your overall

turnover which seems rather unfair when a salaried person has the whole of their salaries considered. If you want a pension, you have to provide one for yourself, but again, they look at your profit rather than turnover when considering the maximum you are able to put in. However, the benefits of being self employed outweigh these issues.

What were your main goals when you set up <http://www.footreading.com>?

I used to write my goals on scraps of paper. I aimed to have a set number of clients per week. I aimed to have written a book and I aimed to teach so many foot reading classes a year. Looking back, my goals were really small but at the time it seemed like such a huge thing to try to achieve, just leaving my day job and setting up a business.

Were there certain values that you prioritised when you started this enterprise?

I decided that I would only work with other people who were fun for me and who had similar values. If I was going to be working for myself, it was going to be much easier if I was ruthless about the sorts of people with whom I would be involved. Misery attracts misery and happiness attracts happiness, so this would be my rule – Jane has fun. If I’m having fun then so are my clients and my students. If I’m not passionate about what I’m doing, then they will pick up on this and my business would suffer.

“Being a foot reader influences other people’s perceptions of my business acumen. They don’t consider me an entrepreneur, nor do they consider me a business woman. It’s only when they see me on television, or learn that I’ve written three books...”

Which has been your best and your worst decision?

Best decision was to go to Hawaii within a few months of setting up my business. I spent two months there, promoting foot reading and my workshops and I wrote a book about foot reading to position myself as an expert. What I hadn’t realised was that many nationalities go there on holiday and it would help to proliferate my ideas more quickly than if I had stayed at home. However, the biggest shock I had when I got home was when my Dad said “I’m really proud of you, Janie” When I asked why he said “You’ve gone to the other side of the world, where you don’t know anyone and set up a successful business all by yourself!” If I’d have framed what I was doing in those terms, I don’t think I’d have been brave enough to do it. Sometimes being naïve and just following one step at a time can look like a huge and massive risk to an outsider but it doesn’t feel like that when you’re just following your plan one step at a time.

How do you define success in your business?

Every time I give a workshop where the students transform, I feel I’ve succeeded. Every time someone asks me to sign their copy of my books, I feel I’ve succeeded. Whenever I look at my bank account and it’s in the black, I feel I’ve succeeded. I don’t think of success in terms of the big picture. I think of success in terms of the little steps you make each day.

Do you find that being a woman determines in any way the progress of your success?

I've never thought of my gender having an effect on the progress of my success. I have noticed though, that when I attend business networks, women tend to operate differently than their male counterparts. They seem to me more co-operative in their approach than competitive. I'm not saying they aren't competitive at all, but I'm saying that women tend to collaborate and co-opt each other into things. It seems a gentler energy to me but it does get good results, it's just different.

I do find though, that if I tell a woman at a network meeting that I'm a foot reader, she would seem fascinated and ask lots of questions, but if I tell a man, the tendency is to raise an eyebrow and move on to the next person who might be of more use to their business.

Does your being a woman in business influence other people's perceptions of your specific business?

Being a foot reader influences other people's perceptions of my business acumen. They don't consider me an entrepreneur, nor do they consider me a business woman. It's only when they see me on television, or learn that I've written three books, a poster, a portable guide, created an elearning seminar and train people all over the world, that they start to see me in a different light.

Is there any person you particularly admire?

My friend Liz Coulter who started out at pamper evenings selling bath products, but now runs a jewellery wholesale company. I've seen her business grow and I've seen her blossom, yet she's done all this whilst bringing up a family. Or there's my friend Yvonne Lockwood in Australia. She is now on her second business, Catalyst Chemicals, where she imports and sells Chemicals to the packaging industry. It's a pretty aggressive market and she's pretty unique being a woman in such an industry yet she's got strong values and sticks to them even when the industry norms would dictate otherwise. As a result, her brand is highly trusted.

Who is your ideal customer?

My ideal customer is someone with a thirst for knowledge, fun to be with, and a keenness to learn and understands holistic therapy.

Would you share one of your funniest moments during your career?

I was in the TV studio on the set of This Morning, when Alan Carr, the comedian, jumped over the sofa, landed next to me and whipped his shoes and socks off. He had bright orange nail varnish on! I said "Alan, usually I read nail varnish colours, but on a bloke I think it means something completely different!"

What have been your main accomplishments as a business woman, a Reflexologist and a Footreader?

My main accomplishments? Learning that I can't do it all myself, so hiring in the skills I need. Valuing advice from people who have experience of what I'm trying to achieve even if it is in a different industry sector to mine. Publishing my own books and beating the sales targets a traditional publisher would expect for a non-fiction book. Seeing clients heal, transform, improve. Watching my own skills grow and change over the years of working. Finding ways to make work fun for me and those I work with.

And finally, do you believe 'EXTRAORDINARY' is possible?

Anyone who works for themselves knows that "ordinary" is just doing what everyone else is doing. Extraordinary is doing something that not everyone else is doing. We self-employed people are doing that every day. Every time we take a risk, our threshold for risk taking improves and we end up doing ultra extraordinary things but in our own minds we don't realise that it is so extraordinary because it's just one of many little steps that we take every day and it's cumulative.

To learn more about Jane or contact her visit www.footreading.com or write to jane@footreading.com.

You may see some of Jane's work latest features at [The Telegraph](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Holistic Therapist Magazine](#), [The Scotsman](#).