

## PRESS CUTTING

# Helping firms start up as they mean to go on

### I DIDN'T GET WHERE I AM TODAY...

**WHO?** Gill MacAulay

**WHAT?** Managing director, Strathclyde University Incubator, Glasgow

**What does your organisation do?** We provide support for start-up businesses. Essentially, we aim to educate them in how to run their business in a commercially successful manner.

**What does your average working day involve?** It starts around 8.30am with a check of the usual blizzard of e-mails I've received. After that, it can encompass anything from a training course, meetings with potential new tenants of the Incubator, with existing clients or with our funding partners and liaising with the university's commercialisation team.

**First senior job?** I spent three years in the US at the University of Colorado Medical Centre which was carrying out research into lung disease.

**Do you work for love or money?** The honest answer is "both". In business, it's important to make money which, in turn, will open up other opportunities. In my personal life, it's the same - if I make money I can afford a few more of life's little luxuries.

**Any major turning points along the way?** Coming back to London from the US was the catalyst for the next stage of my career and I've now been at the Incubator for 20 years.

**What has been your biggest hurdle?** Unfortunately, I have to say that it's being a female. Juggling my

career, a home life and family is very difficult. I've worked with around 120 businesses in my time at the Incubator and, of those, three have been run by female entrepreneurs.

**What's the weirdest job you've had?** I didn't actually get the job but the weirdest one I went for was when I tried to join the circus. After I came back from the US, I spent some time touring Europe and, desperately needing some money, I found myself in Munich being interviewed for a local circus. A complete inability to juggle, tightrope walk or anything else big top-related meant I didn't get past the first stage.

**What did you want to be when you were growing up?** A ballet dancer. My grandfather encouraged me but I was too... everything.

**What do you like least about your job?** I have a real dislike for the amount of red tape I have to deal with - it's maybe just the nature of the areas I work in but I do feel it gets in the way of you doing your job.

**What would you change about your job?** See above. I'd like to be able to wave a magic wand and get people to say "yes" and take a risk once in a while.

**How do you get to work, how long does it take?** I live in the south side of Glasgow and I drive to work - how long it takes depends how busy the M77 is.

"I've worked with around 120 businesses at the Incubator but only three have been run by females"



Gill MacAulay tries to cut through red tape as she helps firms get off the ground

I'm challenging them to be as good and as focused as they can be.

**Ever stepped on anyone's toes along the way?** Probably. Over the last 20 years, I could count on one hand the number of people I've truly upset and some of them were unjustified. I'm trying to assist businesses in learning how to treat people and trade ethically so I'm trying to act as a kind of role model.

**If you met your younger self, would you give her a job?** When I was just out of college, I asked my dad, who ran the Glasgow operation for Distillers, if he would hire me. He said no because I was too young and inexperienced. I know he was trying to teach me a lesson that it was important to make my own way in life but he was wrong - I would have hired me.

**Essential tools for the job?** An ability to listen and communicate well is vital. I also need to have a good understanding of the challenges facing businesses, to be able to deal well with people and to have good negotiating skills.

**What do you wear to work?** Dresses. I did the business suit thing for a while but that's not really my style. Women and men should celebrate their differences.

**Where do you see yourself in five years?** By then, I'll be 55 and would hope to be winding down a little, maybe taking one or two non-executive director roles outwith the companies involved in the Incubator

**How do you let off steam after a hard day?** A game of tennis is a good way of getting your frustrations out.

**Packed lunch, canteen or expense account?** In a typical week, it's a mixture of all three but usually I just have lunch at my desk.

**Long hours or work-life balance?** Definitely work-life balance. When I first worked here I didn't have a holiday for two years and I would work from 8am-8pm most days. That's not sensible - the quality of

your work suffers as the day wears on and you just end up giving yourself more hassle going back to fix things.

**Confrontation or anything for a quiet life?** Confrontation. Most people who know me would say that but hopefully it's constructive confrontation. I'm dealing with start-up businesses and, if I'm doing my job properly, I need to make sure