



# You're fired- so what next?

*Hearing Lord Sugar say: 'You're fired.' in The Apprentice will hit a raw nerve with the 2.36 million unemployed women in the UK. But losing your job can change things for the better, as these women prove...*



Fiona took on a new challenge

## 'My dream job found me after I put my CV online'

**Fiona says:** I was shocked, hurt and tearful when my boss broke the news that my job was being cut. I took it personally. Why me? It felt like the end of my world.

I'd been there for 13 years and I'd really enjoyed it. I had great friends among my colleagues and I never dreamt it could all just be whipped away from me.

I also felt scared. Job interviews, recruitment agencies and CVs were all alien to me. And I worried about losing my identity. My job was such a huge part of me – without it I felt lost.

My brother urged me to post my CV online at monster.co.uk. Writing it was hard, but seeing my achievements in black and white helped boost my confidence. Within 24

hours, a recruitment agency contacted me with details of a patient coordinator role with a cosmetic surgery clinic.

The interview process was nerve-racking and when they asked me to do a presentation for my second interview, I nearly pulled out. I'd never spoken in front of a panel of people before and I didn't feel confident about it, but I wanted the job so much I pushed myself to do it. I was so thrilled when they offered me the job.

I've now switched from working part-time to full-time and I've learnt so much. I'd become too comfortable in my old job. Losing it had made me shake up my life.

Now I have great colleagues and more chances to progress. I'm happier at work than ever.

## Job hunting online

\* Sites such as [monster.co.uk](http://monster.co.uk), [reed.co.uk](http://reed.co.uk), [jobs.telegraph.co.uk](http://jobs.telegraph.co.uk) and [jobs.guardian.co.uk](http://jobs.guardian.co.uk) make it easy for you to upload your CV and search for job vacancies. Some sites offer online advice and support, including 'virtual interviews'.

\* A good CV is a passport to an interview. Make sure you list all your skills and experience as too many applicants underestimate their abilities. Start with a four or five line summary, as recruiters do not always have time to read through the whole thing.

\* Recruiters trawl through online CV databases to find suitable candidates. So be sure your CV includes all the key words employers in your sector might search for.

## 'After retraining I'm now happier than ever'

**Beverley Harper, 54, from Surrey, is divorced with two children, Grace, 23, and Sam, 21. She was made redundant from her role as a sales executive five years ago.**

**Beverley says:** After 20 years' working in sales, I held a senior position with a good salary, so losing it was a huge blow.

I was the main wage earner and had a big mortgage to pay each month. I kept thinking, 'What am I going to do now?'

As I left the office for the last time, I wondered if I'd ever work again. Would I lose everything? I was forced into shaking up my entire life.

Thinking about my skills and interests, I decided I wanted to go down a completely new path. I'd already started a course on

hypnotherapy, which I'd experienced when I tried to give up smoking, so I decided to study for diplomas in clinical hypnosis and cognitive behavioural hypnosis at the College of Cognitive Behavioural Hypnotherapy in London. I followed this up by studying for a masters degree.

I paid the £6,000 course fees with my credit card, remortgaged the house and juggled freelance training jobs. Shopping was limited to charity shops. I'd never been so financially vulnerable, but I viewed the course as an investment in my future.

Retraining has taken five years. Today my earnings aren't even half my old salary, but money isn't everything. My

job satisfaction has risen tenfold, the hours are far more flexible and I've made some lovely new friends.

On the one hand I wish this dramatic change had happened years earlier, but then my life experience helps me empathise with my clients.

Work used to be a pressure cooker – now it's a privilege.

## Retraining for a brand new career

\* [Workinglinks.co.uk](http://Workinglinks.co.uk) offers support for people who have been out of work for six months or more, including funding retraining.

\* **Response to Redundancy** is a government initiative run by Jobcentre Plus that offers skills analysis and training for people involved in the redundancy



Beverley spent five years studying for a new career

process or who are likely to be in the near future.

\* **Funding may be available** for courses at your local college depending on your personal situation. Visit your local Jobcentre.

\* [Learnirect.co.uk](http://Learnirect.co.uk) offers over 600 nationally recognised courses.

## 'My redundancy payout turned my hobby into a business'

**Jo Conway, 38, lives in North Yorkshire with her husband Sam, daughter Bella, two, and one-year-old son, Lewis. She was made redundant from her**

**job selling surgical equipment in October last year.**

**Jo says:** It's incredibly stressful being made

redundant – and when it happens slap bang in the middle of a recession, doubly so. I was earning £32,000 plus bonuses, but suddenly had no idea when my next pay cheque would come.

Even though I got a payout, it was scant comfort because I didn't know how long the money would have to last. Suddenly life was thrown up into the air and I didn't know what to do. At evening classes I'd learnt how to make memo boards, which I

gave to friends as gifts, so after a lot of thought I decided to turn my hobby into a business. The support network [mumpreneuruk.com](http://mumpreneuruk.com) was an inspiration and helped motivate me.

I used my redundancy payout to cover the £1,500 cost of setting up my website [noticemyname.co.uk](http://noticemyname.co.uk), and £2,000 worth of stock, then took free courses on book-keeping and marketing through a government-funded initiative called Business Link.

Setting up was tough, working 12 hours a day while Lewis was teething, but worth it – the month after I lost my job I made £1,200 selling my handmade gifts. I'm now making a profit, although it's nowhere near my old salary – yet! But I love the flexible hours. I work three days a week when Bella and Lewis are at nursery and their bedtime is my worktime.

I do miss the office support network. I'm my own sales, IT,

marketing and accounts departments. But the positives outweigh the negatives.

If I'd had the funding, I'd have done this years ago. My redundancy was a blessing.

## Working for yourself

\* [businesslink.gov.uk](http://businesslink.gov.uk) has information about all aspects of setting up a business, free courses and details about government grants.

\* [smallbusiness.co.uk](http://smallbusiness.co.uk) offers help with business planning, banking, employing staff and legal advice, plus there's a 'Women in Business' section and a forum where you can post questions to experts.

\* [hmrc.gov.uk/startup](http://hmrc.gov.uk/startup) has information about setting up as self-employed. You can download the booklet *Thinking Of Working For Yourself and Working For Yourself – The Guide*, or call the Newly Self-Employed Helpline on 0845 915 4515 for further help.

\* [startupbritain.org](http://startupbritain.org) offers advice from entrepreneurs.



Jo's evening classes led to a new business

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