

Evolve Case Study

Business Profile

Karen Herbert - Suited and Booted (Ayrshire)

Suited and Booted will provide interview outfits free of charge to young people who cannot afford suitable outfits. Karen will collect second hand business wear which will be cleaned and altered as necessary. Young people will be offered help to choose appropriate clothing and a local seamstress used to make small alterations where necessary. In time Karen would also like to be able offer a free makeover/haircut service in partnership with local hairdressers to boost the young people's self esteem and build their confidence.

Karen attended a PwC Evolve day earlier in 2010 and here is what she said about the day:

Firstport: What issue(s) did you bring to the table?

Karen: We had been offered a second building (at £1 per year) so we could expand our services, as long as we provided additional services for a related target market that the landlord wanted – and we could charge for these. It looked like a good deal but we wanted to sanity-check it, make sure we weren't missing something important, and get additional ideas and input before committing ourselves and diverting our energies into an unfamiliar area

Firstport: What suggestions were you given, did you use all the information or some of it?

Karen: They came up with a couple of areas we had missed, and then added new ideas into the mix too. We did revise our plans in light of this, and again subsequently when the timescale moved again, it was useful to ensure we were still on track by going back to the information we got that day, and gave us the confidence to say no when appropriate, with data to back up our response that was credible.

Firstport: What did you manage to implement/achieve from the day?

Karen: Because of building delays we have still not got started in the new building, but last week we signed the lease and are looking forward to moving in on 8th November. We are confident that when we do, there will be no unpleasant surprises, and we can at worst cover our costs, but hopefully over the lifetime of the project actually start to make money for our charitable causes. At this stage everybody is confident about the potential outcomes of this project, and we feel it has been fully researched and all angles covered.

Firstport: Do you have anything else to say about your Evolve day with PwC?

Karen: The PwC team were professional and interested. It is great to have involvement from somebody who is not as close to it as we are, and especially when those people are experts at business advice, and focused on the bottom line. I think some of them were concerned we were not focused on making profit initially, but we soon got over that hurdle, when it was understood we need profit to enable us to deliver our services. We invariably get too close to what we are doing, and it is really great to have a sounding-board, particularly when it is of such high quality and you know their input is commercially sound. And we thoroughly enjoyed our day with them. I hope they all got something useful out of it too.