

Team-work vital ingredient in success

TOM KITCHIN

ALTHOUGH a new business begins from a personal dream or inspiration, making it a reality is very much a team effort and any entrepreneur planning a new enterprise should realise from the start: you can't do it alone.

As I have found over the last six months, as my partner Michaela and I went from having the idea of our own restaurant, to the realisation of our dream when The Kitchin opens on the Leith waterfront tomorrow, starting a business needs you to draw on advice and help from an amazing range of sources.

We had worked in restaurants and hotels around the world for a number of years, and although we had considered business opportunities in London, we decided to return to Edinburgh - the city I was born in and where my family still live - to open our new restaurant.

Straight away, that allowed us to tap in to an essential resource for any new business: family and friends. Although we knew lots about running a kitchen and managing a restaurant, many of the skills needed to start a business were new to us, and being able to call on the experience and knowledge of people who shared our dream has been vital throughout the experience. Beyond family and friends, support and advice from organisations such as the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian's Business Gateway was invaluable.

After a thorough examination of our business plan, the Business Gateway awarded us a £1000 Young Persons Business Grant. The grant was vital validation for us, and gave us more confidence we would succeed.

After finding the right location for the restaurant financing was, of course, the first and biggest hurdle.

If the bank won't back you, you won't go into business. However, the relationship with the bank is about more than just money, and we visited five banks before settling on Allied Irish, who we felt straight away understood what we wanted to do.

We took that same "shopping around" approach for the other expert help.

Staying on top of the financial situation was critical, and perhaps the best advice we received from my father was to run a day-to-day cash flow system. That has allowed us to closely monitor and control spending.

Regulatory requirements are demanding for a restaurant, and the Business Gateway was very helpful in guiding us through the complicated thicket of liquor licences, fire regulations and health and hygiene requirements.

Starting a new business is an emotional roller-coaster but the satisfaction that comes from knowing the doors of your new business are about to open are immense. My advice to any new business owner is: don't be afraid to ask for help!

Tom Kitchin is chef and co-owner of The Kitchin restaurant, Leith.

This article:

<http://edinburghnews.scotsman.com/business.cfm?id=804412006>

Last updated: 31-May-06 12:18 BST