

Case Study: Girls Notepad

Louise Baker had used many online business directories over a number of years, but felt that many weren't particularly female-friendly or meeting her needs. So, earlier this year, she decided to create her own online London directory dedicated to women and specializing in services that many women look for – from hairdressers, florists and jewellers to reliable and trustworthy tradesmen. (Men are obviously welcome to use it too!)



The initial development of the Girls Notepad website was implemented with the help of a specialist design company, however, Louise says, “the website looked fantastic, but then I realized I needed additional loan funding to support my marketing activity and search engine optimization.” She approached Enterprise Enfield and was encouraged to access free advice and guidance available to help businesses become finance-ready – under the **Understanding Finance for Business: Investing for Success Programme**, which is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and Enfield Council.

Business Adviser, Liz Gjoni, was assigned to work with Louise on her business plan - “she challenged my ideas and helped me to focus on producing a realistic business plan and financials, and become investment ready by indicating the types of questions I would be asked prior to the loan funding being agreed.” In the early stages of setting up her business Louise felt very alone with no one to bounce her ideas off - however, Liz provided valuable support and encouragement. Using her extensive sales background, Liz helped Louise find ways of selling the directory listings to potential clients and her detailed financial knowledge ensured that Girls Notepad was ready to apply for funding. A specialist web adviser at the agency, Kevin Saul, also provided guidance on search engine optimization and increasing the level of traffic to the site.

Louise was delighted when £3,800 loan funding was successfully secured from The RSA Trust Loan Fund – the money will be used to complete the website and implement specific marketing activities to promote it. She says, “My vision is for Girls Notepad to be recognized as one of the leading on-line directories dedicated to women, an invaluable source of information. My advice to other new business owners is to strongly recommend that you seek advice from a business adviser early on; they will challenge your ideas to ensure you keep on track to achieve your long term goals.”

Girls Notepad website is due to be launched in July 2010 - the pre-launch website is available to view at www.girlsnotepad.co.uk London based businesses can advertise FREE of charge in the directory for the first 60 days – simply visit the website and register or email your company details with up to 100 words of text to info@girlsnotepad.co.uk . To contact Louise call **0845 269 2145**.

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