



Viv Dykstra The Artemis Network

The former recruiter in investment banking decided to go it alone and last year set up a charity encouraging young women to consider careers in gender-imbalanced sectors such as science and engineering. She reveals what inspires her...

I'm passionate about opportunities for young women. There's a dearth of female candidates entering engineering, the sciences, finance and technology. I founded The Artemis Network to encourage more young women to consider careers in gender-imbalanced industries by reaching out to them while they're still at school. School careers advice in school is notoriously poor. We disseminate real-world information for the young mind.

Employability advice should be part of the curriculum. When we do workshops at schools, they're happy for us to do so because it's free, but trying to timetable it when they've got priorities such as GCSEs and A-levels to get through is tough. Employers complain that young people don't have the employability skills they need, but girls and boys at that age don't even know they need this stuff or that they should be thinking about it. They won't unless it's part of the curriculum.

The biggest shock coming from a corporate world was isolation. In a big organisation you have a whole range of resources at your fingertips – you can pick

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up the phone and call someone for IT support and there's someone who does the accounts. When you set up on your own you obviously don't have any of that and that was my big shock when I first started working for myself.

Stress is the biggest block to creativity. You need to clear your head of the day-to-day, the mundane and the operational stuff in order to have good ideas.

Sometimes just taking yourself out of the working environment allows your thought process to come to life. My team and I clear half days for brainstorms.

I enjoy a balanced life. I've got better at it as I've got older. In my twenties and thirties I worked like a dog for several corporates. Maybe I didn't have so much of a balance then, but I think having kids and needing to have some headspace has meant that I now attach quite a lot of

importance to doing other stuff as well. I think being your own boss helps.

I don't find it difficult to switch off. My three daughters are helpful in distracting me with their wants and needs! I take part in triathlons and I swim. I try to encourage my daughters to be active. If there's one thing we do as a family it's active stuff like going for a run or getting on a bike, things that are good for you as well as fun to do.

I love to travel. I love sailing in the Mediterranean in the summer, it's a favourite activity for me, but I'm happy to go anywhere. I usually try to get away four or five times a year and that's either to New York or around Europe.

Being your own boss isn't right for everybody. Many people who have tried working on their own either hated it or feel completely empowered, and would never go back to a corporate. The responsibility is pretty huge, but there are definite upsides to that responsibility; freedom is a big one of those. ☺

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Where do you get your headspace? Let us know at director.features@iod.com