

AS A girl growing up in London during the 1970s, I never dreamt that one day I would have my own business. It's fair to say I wasn't really interested in school work and didn't apply myself. I had no idea what I wanted to do and the only subject I really enjoyed was domestic science as I loved to cook. When a home economist from the gas board came in to give us a demonstration, I made up my mind I was going to pursue a career in the kitchen.

But fate was to intervene. Despite not applying myself to my studies, I managed to pass a handful of O levels and it was suggested I stay on an extra year to do typing and shorthand. Those skills proved very useful to me and a year later, at 17, I got my first job – working in Westminster for Conservative MP Michael Spicer. It was a general admin role and my duties ranged from answering phones to planning and arranging conferences. I loved the job and discovered I had a passion for helping people.

But after a year, I decided it was time to move on and spread my wings so I found myself another job, again in central London. This was with a Canadian company whose offices were off Regent Street. But from the very first moment I hated it. I was in a typing pool with lots of other girls. It was so dull and boring compared with what I had been

Starting out Roz Bott

Director of Virtually Roz



doing previously. The first three days dragged by, agonisingly slowly. Then, on the Thursday, one of the girls warned me: "Prepare yourself for a really boring day tomorrow. Friday's are really dull around here." That was the last straw. I walked out and never went back.

The next day I went to the job centre and found myself a position at the Central Arbitration Committee. It was this job which changed my life as I was to fall in love with my boss, David Bott. When he moved up to Birmingham in 1980 to work at ACAS, I followed him and we were married soon afterwards. I spent five years working at the unemployment benefit office in Sutton Coldfield, but left when David was asked to help set up the ACAS office in Nottingham.

Moving to Nottingham in 1986 was a new start for us.

Our lives changed for the better when our first

son Mark was born. His brother Oliver followed in 1988.

It was as a young mum that I took my first faltering steps into the world of business. I set up Kiddyhire – a business hiring out car seats, travel cots and double buggies to other young mothers. It was a success and I had a number of hotels and other businesses as clients, as well as individuals. But I found it hard to work from home and combine running a business with being a mum to two young children. I found it particularly difficult when clients kept turning up at the front door at all hours.

So I reluctantly folded the business and took another job. The time just wasn't right.

I did some temping before landing a job at the Government Office for the East Midlands, working in the director's office. It was a very interesting position. After that I went to the Rural Development Commission in Bingham for three years before joining Emda on a secondment.

I helped set up a series of consultation events which helped inform the regional strategy. I was then promoted to become PA to the board of directors looking after the 14 Emda board members. I enjoyed the position but in 2004 my husband had an accident and ended up in a wheelchair for a few weeks. I took some time off to

help look after him and the idea of self employment began to draw me in

A friend had suggested I set up my own business, offering admin support on a freelance basis. It started out very low-key at first. In the early days I combined the business with a temping role, supporting former Nottingham City Council leader Graham Chapman, but the business soon began to grow by word of mouth.

In 2005 I attended a trade show at Olympia in London and it was a revelation. I had my eyes opened to the industry of virtual assistants and I realised there was scope to do so much more with the business than I had previously realised. It was then that I began trading as Virtually Roz and I haven't looked back since.

I really enjoy networking and am a member of both the Chamber of Commerce and the Two Valleys chapter of BNI network, which meets every week in Long Eaton. Networking has definitely helped my business to grow. I am now very busy with PA and admin duties for a range of clients in the SME sector.

I am more fulfilled by my career than ever before and feel I am using all the skills and experience I've gained through the years to build my own business. It's a very exciting time and sometimes I have to stop and pinch myself.