

Making the business headlines

A husband-and-wife team have started a magazine highlighting Cornwall's thriving SME business sector.

Overview

In the past few years Cornwall has been generating an abundance of business news stories as the county's economic renaissance has gathered pace. Yet while many Cornwall-based companies have won national recognition and awards for their achievements, until recently the county itself lacked a dedicated publication exploring issues of interest to locally based entrepreneurs. No longer.

Since May 2006, Business Cornwall magazine has established itself as essential monthly reading for thousands of business people across the county. Each issue features a lively mix of news, views, in-depth analysis and interviews with leading members of the county's business community.

The magazine is the brainchild of Nick and Toni Eyriey, who moved to Cornwall in 2005 in order to start up their own company, Tonick Business Publishing Ltd. Editorial director Nick had previously notched up nearly 20 years of experience as a journalist on local and national newspapers including Today, the Sun and the Mail on Sunday, as well as in the international business press with Euromoney plc. The other half of the partnership, sales director Toni, spent several years as an advertising sales manager for local newspapers and national trade publications.

So what lay behind their move? As so often, it boiled down to the realisation that life in Cornwall simply had much more to offer them and their family.

"We'd been coming down here for holidays for about ten years and had always thought what a great place it would be to bring up young children," Nick explains. "Then we began thinking about how we might actually be able to do it. One idea that seemed to make a lot of sense was a business magazine aimed specifically at people in Cornwall. And I suppose you could say we had the ideal skills set to do it."

Workforce

"At present we producing the whole magazine pretty much on our own, which when you're doing ten issues a year is hard work," Nick says. "But it's nice to know that our editorial independence is guaranteed! When we do start to take more people on we should be able to pick from a strong talent pool in Cornwall, especially with the highly respected journalism programmes at University College Falmouth. At the moment we've got a student from the college's postgraduate Professional Writing course on a placement with us through the Creative Enterprise Scheme, and we're very pleased with the work she's doing."

The more they thought about it, the more convinced they became that they'd spotted a genuine gap in the market. "In business terms, Cornwall struck us as very much an up-and-coming area," says Nick. "There are lots of opportunities opening up and plenty of fresh stories about companies doing new and interesting things. But the county didn't really have any publication that was banging the drum for business and acting as a forum for discussion of business issues, whereas most other regions had at least one locally focussed publication of their own."

Business Cornwall is based – along with Nick, Toni and their three children – in an old farmhouse about a mile away from the superb beach at Gwithian, on Cornwall's north-west coast. For Nick, the location is a dream come true: "It's certainly quite a contrast with where we were before – opposite a lorry depot behind the main Euston to Birmingham train line! That said, we certainly don't feel like we're in the back of beyond, being just a short drive from Truro and a couple of miles from the A30." The house already had some office space, and a converted barn that's attached to it may well come in handy as the publication expands and begins to take on more staff.

Nick and Toni are pleased at what they've managed to achieve in less than a year, with the magazine now going out to nearly 4000 businesses across Cornwall and sales growing month on month. And they're equally happy with the move to Cornwall on a personal level.

"We're just delighted to be in such a lovely area to live and work, and to see the children enjoying the fresh air and space," Nick says. "We've got three and a half acres of land with the house, not to mention five chickens, and it's great for the kids to be able to step out of the back door to play or take the dogs for a walk without us having to worry about what they're up to."

Support

Nick and Toni financed the start-up themselves, getting advice on setting up the company from the Cornwall Enterprise Trust. They also met up with Cornwall Pure Business before moving to Cornwall. "They were particularly helpful in putting us in touch with local contacts and networks," reports Nick. "As it happens, Toni is a bit of a networking queen, and I think she's been returning the favour by introducing potential clients to Cornwall Pure Business! Another group that we've found particularly helpful is the local chapter of Business Network International (BNI), which has enabled us to meet a lot of local business people. The Chamber of Commerce has also been a valuable source of contacts, and I think they find the magazine gives a useful platform for events and projects that they're running."