

A clearer view

Swapping a crowded office in the City for the tranquil beauty of West Cornwall has opened up new horizons for a web development expert.

Overview

For software developer Bill Newland and his wife Hilary, the final spur to move to Cornwall came when friends accused them of forever talking about escaping the rat-race but never actually getting round to doing it. The thing was, it was true. Having taken frequent holidays in west Cornwall, they'd been dreaming for a few years about relocating there, but not advanced much beyond the "wouldn't it be fantastic" stage.

So Bill and Hilary made a resolution. On their next break to Cornwall, they'd look around for a property, and if they found somewhere that really grabbed them they'd put their North London house on the market. And that's exactly what happened. As it turned out, their first purchase fell through, but by that time their minds were made up. A few months later, after finding an alternative property, their new life began in a small hamlet between Penzance and St Ives on the Penwith peninsula.

The area is sometimes known locally as Cornwall's "Wild West", so it seems somehow fitting that Bill now runs his web development business from a log-cabin-style office in the garden of their barn-conversion home.

Technology

Bill believes that his background in software and systems design gives Clarity a fuller understanding of the technical aspects of web development than some of his more design-led competitors. He is a chartered member of the British Computer Society – the main accreditation body for the IT industry in the UK – and has particular expertise in ASP scripting for dynamic web content, as well as in SQL database applications – both of which are particularly useful for building interactive e-commerce sites.

Support

Although Bill undertook the initial move to Cornwall without any support from local agencies and describes Clarity as "self sufficient", Cornwall Pure Business has since provided useful advice on various aspects of business development, including market research and networking. Bill is an active member of The Hub, a network created and run by young business people in Cornwall that offers a lively programme of business-focused workshops and social events, and also of the West Cornwall Business Network.



The name he's given the business, Clarity, also seems appropriate, as there are few parts of the world where you'll find clearer air or more inspirational views.

For Bill, who'd previously worked in a senior position for a well-known software development and Internet support company in the City of London, it's certainly a huge change to go "from an office full of 20 people to an office full of me," as he puts it. But the exterior of his new office is more than a little deceptive – it's actually a fully wired operation equipped with all the kit needed to work at the cutting edge of web technology. And he's by no means unusual in this respect – in fact, this part of Cornwall is now home to a thriving community of digital entrepreneurs.

For Bill, the peace and quiet of the new location has brought big benefits in terms of creativity and concentration. And even two years after the move, he still hasn't quite got over the fact that, if he needs to clear his head while working on a demanding job, he can simply walk out of the door with his two Labradors into some of the most beautiful scenery in Britain.

Clients

To begin with, Clarity worked mainly on projects for London-based clients, keeping a close relationship with Bill's former company. But it's now beginning to market web development and IT strategy consulting services to a wider client base. Bill is particularly pleased to report that he's recently been building e-commerce sites for businesses based in Cornwall, including several start-ups. As its name suggests, Clarity prides itself on the transparency that it offers its clients: "It's all about understanding exactly what's required from their perspective, setting clear and mutually agreed objectives, and not baffling people with geek-speak," Bill says.

Workforce

At present Bill runs the company on his own, hiring in additional expertise (in graphic design, for instance) as necessary. He is planning to take on one or more staff as the workflow continues to expand.