

## A barn-storming success

An eco-friendly children's products company based in the far west of Cornwall has been winning awards - and big sales - through its imaginative approach to marketing.

### Overview

A converted barn perched on the edge of the cliffs on Cornwall's furthest western tip might seem a surprising place to find a dynamic young company that has been making big waves in the world of baby and childcare products. But for Liz Scambler, founder and MD of Lollipop Children's Products Ltd, Cornwall has been the ideal environment in which to turn a brilliant idea into a runaway business success.

Five years ago, Liz was helping her husband to run their organic farm on a spectacular stretch of National Trust coastline between Lands End and St Ives. The idea for Lollipop came from Liz's own experience as a mother, along with her passionate commitment to the environment. She'd always used washable cotton nappies for her own three children, conscious of the massive waste problem caused by disposables, but had been frustrated by the limited choice available.

"Even when more new products started coming onto the market, it was difficult to find out what was right for your

### Workforce

Lollipop now has 10 staff at its headquarters in Cornwall, together with a team of 198 agent-advisers in towns and villages all around the country. Each of these is encouraged to come up with ideas of their own to introduce the company's products to mothers locally - such as the very successful "Napuccino" coffee-and-chat events.

Liz tries to ensure that her local staff are able to arrange their work around their lives, and believes that being able to do this is one of the great benefits of being in business in Cornwall: "It makes for not just better lives, but better business too!"

### Clients

Up until now, Lollipop products have mainly been sold direct to mothers through the agent network and the company's website. But the new Onelife range has already been taken up by over 40 independent nursery retailers and is also attracting interest from national chains.



child," Liz explains. "I asked myself who's best at giving such advice, and the answer I came up with was mothers with experience of their own to draw on. The idea for 'Team Lollipop' - a network of agents who are also parents of young children - is really just an update of the old way of doing things, when mums used to advise other mums over the garden fence."

This word-of-mouth approach, together with the quality of Lollipop's product range, has proved hugely successful, and the company now has a network of around 200 agent-advisers all over the UK. Using feedback from these hands-on nappy experts, Lollipop has recently developed a new product of its own, the Onelife Nappy, designed to be the ultimate cotton washable. Liz was delighted when it won the Highly Commended Show Product of the Year Award at the 2004 Baby & Child International Fair, and her own achievement was recognised recently when she was presented with a Protection of the Environment Award at the international Young Business Achievers conference.

### Technology

The company's clear, colourful website accounts for about 20% of its sales, and Lollipop has now launched an additional dedicated site for the new Onelife range. Its remote rural location is in one of the very few parts of Cornwall still without broadband access, but this is set to change soon with the roll-out of wireless broadband.

### Support

Liz speaks warmly of the support she has received from various local agencies: "The people down here really believe in Cornwall as a place to live and work. They're genuinely full of energy to help you and they have the enthusiasm to follow things through. SWIG have been particularly helpful with funding, and we've also made use of the Business Link Development Voucher scheme. When we needed to convert a dilapidated barn into warehouse and office space, a Rural Development Initiative grant from Objective One made this possible."