

Going into business as a partnership

Case study: Karen and Allison

Not all of Get Ahead VA's Regional Directors set up in business by themselves. Our Newcastle office is run by a pair of Regional Directors, and we're always happy to consider teams of two who are interested in opening a new branch of Get Ahead VA.

To find out more about what it's like to start and run a business with another person, we talked to Karen and Allison, the joint Regional Directors of our Newcastle office, to find out their advice for anybody considering doing it themselves.

There are so many reasons to go into business with another person – it can bring all sorts of benefits and a few extra challenges, so we're here to tell you what to expect, from our experience.

One of the biggest upsides to starting a business as a pair is that you always have someone there who's going through the same thing as you, and who can offer support and motivation along the way. You can also play to each other's strengths – our working styles really complement each other, and that's been a huge part of making our business a success.



Another advantage is that you can scale the business more quickly through the simple fact that there are two of you! That means twice as much networking, twice as many phone calls and twice as many ideas to help the business grow.

Of course, for all of this to work, it's crucial to find the right person to go into business with. For us, going into business together made a lot of sense. We met at our previous workplace, so we were colleagues first and then we became friends. That made opening our Newcastle branch so much easier, because we've always had that professional basis to our relationship, and we understood each other's work ethics before we started.

So, if you're thinking about starting a business with another person, it's really important that you give your relationship that professional grounding first. Perhaps, like us, you're already colleagues and you know you work together well – but if you haven't worked together before, try to collaborate on some smaller projects to find out if your working styles are going to gel when you take on something bigger.



You should also remember that working together means working together, so if you're likely to distract each other and talk all day then you might not make the best business partners! A business partner is someone who you can work next to quietly when you need to, and who can wait to chat until break times or after work. We find that cutting down on distractions and having a clear desk policy helps us to concentrate during work hours!

Another important consideration is where you're going to be working. We work in a spare bedroom-turned-office in Karen's house. We have a desk each and a laptop each (and plenty of Get Ahead VA mementos spread around the room to remind us that we're part of a bigger team). Working from home is a great way to cut down on costs, especially when you're just starting out, so you need to consider whether you will be comfortable having the other person in your house every day – as well as more practical things like who will commute and who will set aside the space for an office.



Starting a business as a pair was absolutely the right decision for us. With Get Ahead VA you get plenty of support anyway, including training and mentorship and the knowledge that you're part of a bigger, national team. But having another person working with you every day, towards the same goal, provides an extra level of confidence that is just invaluable.

If you're thinking of opening a Get Ahead VA regional office as a pair, we say go for it!