

## My first year in BUSINESS

# Graphics firm builds up image

By Maggie Wakefield

SABINA Lorkin was one of countless would-be entrepreneurs for whom the introduction of the pay-as-you-go *auto-entrepreneur* scheme offered an easy and risk-free route into starting a business. However, Sabina did not even wait for the official launch of the scheme in January 2009.

"I had been toying with the idea of starting a business for a long time, but the level of *cotisations* levied on new businesses made me nervous," she explains. "In June 2008, I found out that the rules for *micro-entreprises* had already changed. My accountant knew nothing about it and advised me to wait until January.

"However, the *chambre de com-*

**Sabina Lorkin loves the variety that comes with her work: from designing brochures to creating websites, and the nature of the job means she can work for clients based hundreds of miles away**

*merce* in Granville confirmed the simpler rules, so I registered my website design business with the *chambre de metiers* and I registered as an artisan for my photography and graphic design work.

"Finding out the new rules took a lot of investigation on my part, but I'm glad I pursued it, because, had I taken my accountant's advice and waited until January, I would have lost many thousands of euros."

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Mrs Lorkin subsequently changed to *auto-entrepreneur* status because of its simplified accounting procedures. However she adds: "If business carries on this well, there is every chance that sooner rather than later I will hit the turnover limit and change back to *micro*.

"Anibas Design has taken off surprisingly well. Most businesses exist in order to make money, and from the financial point of view it has exceeded my expectations.

"Also I'm enjoying it more than I expected. The more different projects I have, the more varied my work is. This morning I was working on brochures for a museum with a 30,000 print run. This afternoon I will be designing packaging."



**OWN BOSS:** Sabina Lorkin says she is happy to keep Anibas Design as a solo operation

Mrs Lorkin has advertised on expatriate forums and found it effective, but says word of mouth is the best form of advertising. Investing time in community groups, she says, can benefit them and show them what you are doing.

Another bonus for her is that her husband, Simon, runs a separate antique restoration business from his workshop below her office.

"Because of Simon, I have just done a website for an antique clock restorer, and one of my French clients, a jewellery designer in Orne, came here to see me and now Simon is doing some work for him."

Mrs Lorkin's clientele is about 50 per cent French, 50 per cent English. Most are small to medium

businesses, from solo artisans and artists up to a catering company with 250 employees; many are in Normandy and Brittany, but by no means all.

"The beauty of my job is that I can work for anybody, anywhere. I have created a website for a client in Paris. I have two clients in the Alps. I've designed a logo for an association in Spain. I have a client in Canada.

"My graphic design work makes my websites individual, and I believe clients come to me because they like my particular style. I don't have any desire to grow my business and employ staff. I'm simply looking to earn an income for myself, and to continue enjoying what I do."