

Get your business off to the best start

A Stratford-upon-Avon woman has launched a new business, inspired by her international travels and her home town.

Donna Nixon founded 52 Degrees North Travel after receiving advice and support from the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce who run the programme on behalf of Warwickshire councils, following eight years working for a housing association in the region.

After several years of wanting to establish her own company but not knowing in what sector, Donna decided that she would turn her love of travel into a business and help others get more out of their holidays.

The company name refers to the line of latitude of Stratford-upon-Avon and Donna was keen to reference the town in the business.

That tie was made even stronger after the company received local support including from the Chamber and from Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Venture House Business Centre.

She said: "I am very proud of the fact that I am Stratford born and bred. I grew up in the town, we live here now and lots of people have been very supportive of the business.



"I was introduced to the Chamber by a friend and went on some of its courses held at Venture House around elements such as business strategy and marketing.

"It was there that I met Tanya King, who became my business mentor, and she has worked with me on a one-to-one basis to help me in the very early stages of the business.

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*Pictured (left to right): Tanya King,
Donna Nixon, Anne Solomon*

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This project forms part of the CW Business: Start, Grow and Scale Programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Warwickshire County Council and the district & borough councils.

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“I’ve also been attending the fabulous Donut Time networking events at Venture House. It’s great to be able to bounce ideas off other businesses, pick up business tips and also make use of the fantastic facilities on offer there to small companies.”

Donna added: “I knew for quite a long time that I wanted to run my own business but I wasn’t really sure what in. When I first met my husband we went off travelling around the world and, at the end of the trip, we got engaged. That love of travel has continued.

“We’ve since had kids and we know what works if you are travelling on your own, as a couple or with children because we’ve done them all! So it made perfect sense to make travel my business.

“I offer a very personal service to customers – be that over the phone, email or even Facebook Messenger. I ask a lot of questions up front – from what temperature they prefer through to any activities they want to take part in and go from there.

“It can range from a weekend break in London right through to a holiday of a lifetime. I know people can book everything through the internet but, actually, what we are finding is that many don’t want to waste their time trawling through the web.

“We can also benefit from exclusive offers to the trade, which we can make available to our customers.

“So while there has been a great deal of publicity around high street travel agents recently, I believe we are operating in an area of the industry where there is still a strong market – and that is certainly proving to be the case.

“Having someone like Tanya to bounce ideas off and tap into her knowledge has been great – she has even become a customer of mine which is about as supportive as you can get!”

Continued...

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The support of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce's start-up team was thanks to a project part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

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"Whichever way you come at it, there is support available via the Chamber which can really help a new company to find its feet and grow very quickly, which Donna's example proves.

"And, in this instance, the fact that we could work in partnership with Venture House meant that 52 Degrees North Travel received joined up support helping her to grow even quicker.

Anne Solomon, who manages Venture House, said: "It's great to see the programme deliver and give residents the confidence and skills to start a new business. As with all our clients, we wish Donna every success and hope that she can inspire others, even if it's just to come down to Venture House and talk about a new business idea."

For more information on the support available, go to www.cw-chamber.co.uk or call 024 7665 4321. Find out more about Venture House at www.venturehousestratford.co.uk or call 01789 207500.

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