

# The Story of Stellar



*from Cranfield School of Management Newsletter (Oct 2003)*

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**Programme and Year:** MBA 1993  
**Company:** Stellar Consulting Ltd  
**Sector:** Management Consultancy  
**Start-up funds:** £2,000

Stellar Consulting began with a telephone call from out of the blue. Two years ago, having lived through more than enough “interesting times” at Railtrack, I left to set up as an independent management consultant. My now business partner, Debbie Rynda, called to ask how things were going, and we discussed “doing something together”. Our business grew from that seed.

Stellar specialises in change management and leadership development. Our work over the past eighteen months has been exciting and fulfilling. We have worked with leadership teams, coached high fliers, and supported major change programmes.

Stellar is one of Charles Handy’s “fleas”, a small, entrepreneurial venture creating a living amongst the big corporations - the “elephants”. We started Stellar on a virtual business model: no plush offices, no employees except ourselves, just £2,000 of start up capital and a flexible network of seasoned associates. Our associates are our greatest asset. They are typically senior professionals with both line management and consultancy experience, also running their own independent businesses.

Our IT, design, administration, and finance support are all virtual provided through other small, independent businesses. Stellar is one of a growing number of management consultancies working this way, taking advantage of some of the seismic shifts in our sector.

There have been plenty of challenges along the way. We lost our third business partner – who was also the person we both knew best - just as we won our first piece of work. An exciting joint venture with a much larger organisation collapsed when they were abruptly taken over. We got too busy too quickly to do proper thinking about our own strategy and plans for the future, and to put in place basics like our website – we are just tackling these things now. On the work/life balance front, we have not always got it right, and we’ve worked most weekends since we started up.

But the difficulties have been far outweighed by the pleasures and achievements of running our own business. We love our work and we have the freedom to work our way for our clients without the big firm imperative of billable hours and putting in “face time”. Our two biggest wins have both been in competition with big name firms. We’ve spoken at conferences, and had our names in print. Our business has gained more

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than we ever expected from our associates in terms of their generosity with their time and with their ideas. Above all, we've discovered that one plus one equals way more than two - in terms of the productivity and creativity generated by our business partnership.

For the future, ideas for a couple of books are brewing and we want to speak at more conferences. While we aim to grow, we also aim to maintain our virtual business model. We want to create value, build our brand, consolidate our intellectual property, and to be in a position in a few years time where we can have the choice of selling the business. And we aim to stop working weekends.