

Women in Business Showcase

March 2026



Welcome to the Enterprise Oxfordshire Women in Business Showcase.

Across Oxfordshire, women are building remarkable businesses. They are starting new ventures, growing established companies, creating new jobs, and contributing to the vitality of our local economy and communities.

This publication highlights a selection of the inspiring women entrepreneurs that Enterprise Oxfordshire has had the privilege to support. Each story reflects the ambition, resilience and creativity that drives small business success.

Enterprise Oxfordshire is the Growth Hub for the county, helping individuals and businesses connect with the advice, opportunities and networks that enable them to grow.

Through our work, we aim to make it easier for entrepreneurs and SMEs to access practical, impartial support when they need it most.

We hope the stories shared here not only celebrate the achievements of these business owners, but also encourage others across Oxfordshire who may be considering starting or growing a business of their own.

If their journeys resonate, we would be delighted to support you too.



Carolyn Nicholson Virtual Support Services

carolynnicholson.co.uk

I specialise in providing administrative support to neurodivergent solopreneurs and small business owners. My mission is simple: admin liberation. I help business owners transition from "admin Argh!" to "admin Ahhh!" by handling the administrative burden that drains their energy and time, enabling them to focus on revenue-generating activities they enjoy.



When I joined the Business Spark programme, I was grappling with a fundamental question: how do I make this a viable business? Each Spark session tackled a different piece of the puzzle - from defining my USP to understanding finances to identifying where I'd find clients. The pitch session at the end gave me confidence I'd never had before. The OxBOoSt sessions and Women in Business Gatherings have become valuable touchpoints in my routine, keeping me connected and continuously learning.



Carolyn Nicholson
VIRTUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

I've gained clients directly through the networking events - people who've become long-term partners in my business journey. My network has expanded considerably, not just in numbers but in quality of connections with other business owners who genuinely understand the entrepreneurial experience.

The strategic clarity I've gained has been game changing. I now understand how to position my services, how to communicate my value without undervaluing my expertise, and how to structure my business for sustainable growth rather than just keeping busy. Perhaps most valuable has been shifting my focus to customer experience rather than just service delivery. This shift has fundamentally changed how I approach client relationships and has become central to my "admin liberation" mission.

On a personal level, the 1:1 sessions have been incredibly supportive during challenging moments. Having advisors who understand both business pressures and personal wellbeing has made the difference between pushing through and burning out. I've built genuine partnerships that extend beyond the formal programmes, creating ongoing opportunities for learning and collaboration that continue to shape my business evolution.

This year will mark a major transformation for my business. I'm launching a completely restructured service model inspired by everything I've learned through EOB support and the partnerships I've gained from it. Looking further ahead, I'm building toward an agency model with a "one-stop shop" approach to all aspects of business support. This vision only became clear through the Business Accelerator programme. I'm also exploring speaking opportunities following my initial webinar for EOB in July 2025 on reducing business stress through outsourcing. The positive feedback has opened doors to share the "admin liberation" message with wider audiences, positioning me as a thought leader in supporting neurodivergent entrepreneurs.

If you are looking for support for your business get in touch with us to find out how our team of specialists at Enterprise Oxfordshire can help you.

Claire Noelle Graphic Design

clairenoelledesign.com

Claire Rowland is a graphic designer with over two decades of experience transforming ideas into powerful visual stories. Specialising in pitch decks and high-impact presentations, she works with businesses across science, technology, luxury goods, HR, education, and leisure to communicate complex messages with clarity and impact. Based in Oxfordshire, her work is recognised for combining precise technical skill with design flair, enabling clients to present confidently in environments such as investment pitches, acquisitions, and industry events.

Drawing on her breadth of experience in both freelance and in-house settings, Claire offers clients a complete design partnership. She is adept at building cohesive visual systems, unifying typography, grids, colour palettes, and imagery, to produce presentations that not only look polished but also engage audiences on a narrative level. Her portfolio includes successful funding decks for technology start-ups, luxury brand collateral for jewellery designers entering the wealth management market, and animated educational presentations for specialist wellbeing programmes. Each project demonstrates her ability to balance creativity with functionality, ensuring content resonates with its intended audience.



CLAIRE NOELLE DESIGN
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

At the core of Claire's approach is the belief that design should serve both purpose and audience. She thrives on distilling technical data, strategic objectives, or creative ideas into visuals that make an immediate impact and remain memorable long after delivery. Her value lies not only in her technical command of design platforms but also in her ability to listen to clients, understand their goals, and translate their message into a compelling visual journey.

Thanks to Enterprise Oxfordshire, Claire has been able to participate in numerous face-to-face events designed for small businesses throughout Oxfordshire. These events have provided her with valuable opportunities to discuss her business, establish connections with start-ups and small enterprises across the region, and enhance her professional network. The support from Enterprise Oxfordshire has significantly increased Claire's outreach and visibility within the local business community.

Looking ahead, Claire's vision is to continue shaping how businesses present themselves in an increasingly competitive and visual-first world. She sees presentations not as supporting material but as decisive tools for influence, investment, and change. Her aim is to raise the standard of pitch and presentation design, helping organisations across industries communicate with greater confidence, clarity, and creativity, and to play her part in designing work that supports innovation, progress, and a better future.

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Holly Scott Interior Design

hollyscottinteriordesign.co.uk

I run Holly Scott Interior Design, offering a range of interior design services to support homeowners at different stages of their journey. My work includes one-to-one interior design consultations, full residential interior design projects, and education-based offerings for those who want to take a more hands-on role in designing their own homes. Alongside bespoke client work, I run Happy Home Design, my design academy that teaches homeowners how to confidently design their homes with professional guidance, as well as hosting in-person Luxury Interior Design Days in Oxfordshire.

As my business has evolved, one of the key challenges has been increasing visibility. Enterprise Oxfordshire has provided valuable support through access to networking events, expert-led sessions and a strong community of local business owners. Attending the Women in Business Gatherings has given me the opportunity to connect with other entrepreneurs, share experiences, and feel supported in both the practical and emotional aspects of running a business.



Holly Scott

INTERIOR DESIGN

The expert talks and workshops have offered clear, actionable insight, particularly around business growth and marketing. I have also benefited from focused marketing sessions with Jane Abbott, which have helped me step back, refine my messaging and think more strategically about how I communicate the value of my work and reach the right audience. Overall, the support has provided reassurance, fresh perspective and renewed confidence, helping me feel more grounded and focused as I continue to grow my business.

Over the coming year, I am focused on expanding the educational and experiential side of my business. This includes developing my first book, a practical interior design guide that shares my Happy Home Design approach and helps homeowners create beautiful, confident homes.

I will also continue developing Happy Home Design, my online design academy, making expert interior design guidance more accessible while maintaining a supportive, high-quality experience. My focus is on sustainable growth that allows me to reach a wider audience while staying true to my values and the personal approach at the heart of my work.

Octopus Events

octopusevents.com

Octopus Events is a luxury event management agency, run by Sarah Hopgood, specialising in the design, organisation and seamless production of bespoke events and celebrations for private & corporate clients. With 20 years of international experience, Sarah delivers outstanding events, from corporate conferences and awards to team building, product launches, and private celebrations. She turns client ideas into memorable occasions with careful attention to detail.

At Octopus Events, our main objective for our corporate clients is to support them with their brand positioning, improving audience engagement, generate revenue, rewarding staff and boosting client loyalty. Like the tentacles of an octopus, we can manage every aspect of your event from concept development, venue finding, planning, logistics, production, Health & Safety, entertainment to on-site coordination — ensuring a seamless experience from start to finish.



OCTOPUS
EVENTS

Over the years, our main challenge has been demonstrating to potential clients the strategic benefits of partnering with Octopus Events. With our experience, we help organisations save time, boost efficiency, lower risk, engage audiences, and support strategic growth through well-managed events. Our ambition is to support a greater number of clients across Oxfordshire. We are also exploring opportunities to start delivering our own events, utilising the established relationships we have built with local suppliers over the last ten years.

Sarah worked with an Enterprise Oxfordshire mentor during the early business setup, gaining essential guidance and support. This mentorship gave her confidence and helped lay the groundwork for the business's growth. Octopus Events received a grant from Enterprise Oxfordshire during the COVID-19 pandemic that allowed us to upgrade our website. With a local web designer, we created a modern site reflecting our brand and values. The new website improved Octopus Events' online presence and credibility, especially during the pandemic when digital engagement was vital. We appreciate Enterprise Oxfordshire's grant and are proud of our progress.

Regarding our future plans, we aim to offer even more engaging events for our clients and are exploring possibilities to organize our own local events. We have plenty of ideas in the works, so watch this space!

If you are looking for support for your business get in touch with us to find out how our team of specialists at Enterprise Oxfordshire can help you.

Palmer + Partners Architects

palmerandpartners.co.uk

Palmer + Partners Architects design homes that are thoughtful, future-ready and rooted in true sustainability. Founded 16 years ago, we are a residential architecture practice based in Oxfordshire who specialise in bespoke new homes, Class Q conversions, whole house remodelling and developer led projects through our BluPrint offering.

Palmer+Partners
Architects

We work collaboratively with homeowners and developers to understand not just what they want to build - but how they want to live. With BluPrint, our home design plans for developers and landowners, we provide certainty from the start of a project and quickly understand the potential in a site. With in-house certified Passive House designers, sustainability is not just a 'nice to have', it underpins every decision we make.



The support Palmer + Partners Architects have received from Enterprise Oxfordshire has been both tangible and long-lasting. An earlier grant enabled us to strengthen our investment in virtual reality technology and therefore in our design process. This has allowed us to differentiate ourselves in an already competitive market and in turn improve our client engagement. From a developer perspective, this technology allows us to clearly demonstrate layouts and material choices early on. This means that our planning discussions feel smoother, and we can see more efficient project delivery. This has also meant that our BluPrint designs have evolved, enabling us to offer a design-led solution that balances commercial viability with sustainability.

Alongside this, I have attended courses that have supported my development as a business owner. I have been able to think more strategically about growth, resilience and long-term direction for Palmer + Partners and I am proud of the strong team we have built and how we are staying true to our values. This support has enabled us to grow with confidence and invest responsibly. We will continue pushing forward as a business that combines design excellence with innovation.

Palmer + Partners continues to grow, and sustainability still remains at the heart of everything we do, with an increasing focus on low energy homes, Passive House principles and responsible material choices. But above all, our future plans are about making a positive impact, not just on our clients, but on our team and the environment, all while designing homes that are built for the future. We are excited for the future and what it holds for us.

Shake Up Talent

shakeuptalent.com

Founded by certified coach Phaedra Tarbit, Shake Up Talent draws on 25+ years in HR leadership across FTSE 100 firms and SMEs. We specialise in women's leadership development-including early careers coaching and talent management consultancy.

Shake Up Talent takes a dual approach, helping organisations address the systems that shape women's experiences at work while delivering coaching that builds confidence, presence, and career progression. Clients include organisations of all sizes-from emerging businesses to large, complex enterprises-across a variety of sectors. Shake Up Talent brings corporate-level expertise affordably to organisations of all sizes, working directly with leadership teams or alongside HR functions.



Based in Oxfordshire, Shake Up Talent partners with organisations ready to advance women, build inclusive workplaces, and leverage the competitive edge of gender-diverse leadership.

Starting Shake Up Talent as a solopreneur has been both exciting and demanding. From scratch, I've built a business plan, designed services, mapped the market, and taken on marketing, IT, finance, and PR - all areas where I had limited prior experience. A key challenge has been visibility and trust: standing out in a busy market while demonstrating credibility and value to potential clients. Balancing strategic growth with the practical day-to-day running of the business has also been a constant learning curve. I have made use of various Enterprise Oxfordshire resources, including free webinars on AI, LinkedIn presence, and other business topics, as well as Women in Business Gatherings. I've also received 1-to-1 marketing advice, which helped me clarify my approach to promoting Shake Up Talent.

Through the Foundations to Growth network, I was able to share business plans, test ideas, and discuss practical challenges with other entrepreneurs. This support has helped me establish the practical foundations of running a business, from refining services to navigating marketing and visibility strategies. It has provided useful guidance and access to a network of peers, helping me focus on growing Shake Up Talent and expanding my client base.

Looking to the future, I plan to launch a podcast focused on women in leadership, featuring everyday women who have built their careers, sharing their journeys, challenges, and leadership lessons. I am also developing an online coaching programme to support women with accessible development, complementing the podcast and extending my reach and impact in developing female talent.

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The Art of Perception

theartofperception.co.uk

The Art of Perception Ltd is a psychology-led consultancy founded by Zeena Hicks, also known as The Positivity Doctor. The work supports leaders, organisations, educators, and families who are carrying a lot - responsibility, pressure, and constant decision-making - and want a steadier, clearer way of leading and living.

At its heart, the work is about helping people function well when life feels demanding. Drawing on positive psychology, neuroscience, and self-leadership research, Zeena translates complex ideas into practical, everyday tools that help people think more clearly, regulate stress, and respond rather than react. This isn't surface-level positivity; it's about moving out of constant coping and into a calmer, more grounded way of working and relating.



 **THE ART OF
PERCEPTION**

Alongside The Art of Perception Ltd, Zeena leads Positive Education UK, supporting schools and communities, and delivers talks and training internationally. While the work now reaches global audiences, the business remains firmly rooted in Oxfordshire, combining local connection with wider impact.

As the business grew across coaching, education, research, and speaking, the main challenge was how to grow without taking on more pressure or losing focus. With several strands of work developing at once, the aim was to grow in a way that felt sustainable, joined-up, and confident, without constant second-guessing or overload.

Over the years, I have attended many of the Women in Business Gatherings, which I find consistently supportive and encouraging. They offer space to connect, think, and learn alongside other business owners, and I always leave feeling clearer and more energised. In 2024, I also joined the West Oxfordshire Business Accelerator Programme. This included masterclasses, peer groups, one-to-one support, leadership development, and networking. The programme offered the right balance of structure and flexibility, helping me step back, test ideas, and make decisions with more confidence. Being part of a psychologically safe environment made a real difference, reducing isolation and supporting steady progress.

My plans include growing my executive and organisational work, expanding Positive Education UK, and continuing to speak and train internationally. I'm also developing research-informed programmes that support wellbeing, leadership, and neuroinclusion. Alongside this, I'm working towards completing my doctorate and publishing academic papers, by the end of the year, and making time to properly recharge along the way!

If you are looking for support for your business get in touch with us to find out how our team of specialists at Enterprise Oxfordshire can help you.

Find out more about upcoming Enterprise Oxfordshire Business events, workshops and webinars designed to help your business.

[VIEW EVENTS](#)

If you haven't yet completed the Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Support Tool you can do so here to get a business support plan tailored to your business.

[BUSINESS SUPPORT TOOL](#)

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