

In the first of a new series, Pascale Scheurer charts the first steps of her new practice

We didn't actually set out to start a practice. Having studied together at Cambridge, Holly and I met again last year, and together we started exploring projects – a magazine for young architects, research, an event, an exhibition. We chose the name for our venture – Surface to Air – on a winter's evening leafing through the thesaurus over a bottle of wine or two. We wanted something that would reflect our various projects – dynamic, slightly feminine, but with an edge.

We spent some time checking it out to ensure that:

- the name was available (search www.companieshouse.co.uk)
- a web domain name was available (www.getonline.co.uk)
- and the trademark (www.patent.gov.uk)
- and most important, what appeared when we googled the name!

We found the practicalities of setting up fairly straightforward, everything you need to know is on www.businesslink.gov.uk, including sources of funding and money-saving tips. £2,000 covered the bare essentials, such as incorporating the company, business stationery, buying trademarks, equipment and software, phone calls and marketing.

However, the real investment has been our time – we've logged about £50,000 equivalent of work so far. We initially continued to work full time for practices and spent our early mornings, evenings and weekends on Surface to Air. After nine months we arranged a three-day week with our employers' support. In September a lucrative project came in, and with some cash in the bank, I left Wilkinson Eyre to run the practice full time.

Our first built project is due on site in spring. But working with inspiring clients and communities to create events and publications are, for us, equally important. Now we need an office, or do we...?

Pascale Scheurer

www.surface-to-air.com