

Jenny Brearley left a career in computer software to start up a specialised dog boarding service in 1993. Don't Fret Pet! matches dogs with families who look after them in their own homes

I have always loved dogs and, after leaving my parental home to live in flats and to travel as much of the world as I possibly could, I waited patiently for many years to get a dog of my own. When I finally knew that I was ready to stay in Australia and only take short trips overseas, I adopted my own dog, Sophie, a Rhodesian Ridgeback.

I worked for 18 years in computer software and hated about 17.9 of them. The money was great, which made it difficult to leave it behind. However, in 1993, I did a course where I was told that if I pursued my passion, everything else would follow. Around that time I was travelling with my job and often had the problem of what to do with my dog. Because of this problem, the idea for Don't Fret Pet! came to me and I decided to make the break from computers and do something that I would enjoy.

At that time there was, to my knowledge, no other service in Australia that arranged for dogs to stay in caring family homes when their owners were going away. Building a business based on a completely new concept has been a lot of hard work but I was determined to create a great, service-oriented business that would fill a niche in the dog boarding market.

My first step was to perform market research to determine if there was a need for such a business and the response was an overwhelming "yes, please!" from other dog owners.

From the very beginning I have spent a considerable amount of time and money educating myself so that my business would be successful. I have attended courses and seminars, read books and listened to tapes and I continue to do so.

I have also employed professionals when I needed advice. I believe that it is very important to have good accountants, legal advisers and marketing advisers who understand and support my business. I remember

one accountant sitting behind his desk and saying to me in an arrogant manner, "I don't see how this business can possibly work." Four years later he rang me to have his own dogs minded and I reminded him of his comment. His reply was, "I didn't see how it could work then and I don't know how you could possibly still be in business."

I run the business from home using a telephone, message bank, fax machine, mobile phone, computer and

printer. My computer background has been invaluable in developing a comprehensive database which allows me to find a customer or minder's details in seconds and assists in the matching of dogs with families — however, I still have the final say over the computer.

I love working from home, especially as it allows me to be with my dogs who spend their day by my side.

Each day I speak to many other dog lovers on the telephone and get a lot of satisfaction from doing so, as they are all wonderful people (well, 99.9 percent of them).

Running my own business has been a lot of hard work with some trying times, but now that I have started selling franchises I am about to really reap the rewards. 

