

your product the cheapest and buy inferior materials (like fabrics, lining, zips). Make a good product and you will attract the right customer who is willing to pay your price.'

Michelle loves the flexibility and fluidity that comes with running her own small business. 'I am my own boss, I work flexible hours. But to run a successful business, you have to listen to your employees and be available to them.' Another benefit of being a small company is that Michelle can change designs or come up with new designs and take them to market much faster than bigger competitors.

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs? Do thorough research into the industry. 'Speak to people already in the industry, so that you can learn from their mistakes. Don't reinvent the wheel.' She also advises saving as much as you can and scaling down on household expenses, 'because you are going to need every penny'.

Start-up costs: About R20 000
Profit: 'This is our second year of full-time operation,' says Michelle, 'and we've seen considerable growth in the last 12 months.'

Business: En-Core Fitness Studio
Entrepreneur: Victoria Ashford-Smit

'I wanted to create a workout space that energises and inspires.'

Victoria's successful dance career started when she was only five. She's been part of the Johannesburg Youth Ballet, and



VICTORIA ASHFORD-SMIT

has performed professionally with the (now defunct) PACT Dance Company. After a brief diversion into advertising, Victoria followed her greatest passion – movement of the body – and in 2006 established her own Pilates studio. She was a Pilates instructor for over 10 years, but felt that something was always pulling her back to dance. 'I love the energy of dancing and the fun of it,' she says. 'I wondered – "Why can't a workout be this fun?"'

So in 2011, Victoria introduced

ballet barre, which she believes is a fun, effective way to stay in shape, to her studio. She developed her own dance-cross-Pilates technique, the first of its kind in South Africa, and has now formalised it as the En-Core Barre Method. She has written up a manual and teaches it to other fitness instructors who, in turn, implement it in their studios.

Victoria believes that her business was responding to a specific need in the competitive fitness industry: 'I wanted to create a space that was

Victoria introduced ballet barre, which she believes is a fun, effective way to stay in shape, to her studio.

more personal than the traditional gym environment, a space which energises and inspires people to sustain their workout on a consistent basis.' She allows no more than 10 people in each class. The En-Core

Barre Method is part of a growing, worldwide trend also known as ballet barre, which involves the use of ballet movements as part of a fitness regime. 'I'm very proud to have been involved in introducing my particular version of ballet barre here. I'm excited for the future,' Victoria says.

Start-up cost: Around R200 000. **Profit:** The business is already making enough profit to live on.



Business: The Training Room Online
Entrepreneur: Kirsty Chadwick

'We are essentially recreating the classroom.'

New Zealand-born Kirsty started her career as a music and maths teacher. For a change of pace she decided to teach in London, but soon found her attention drawn to the bustling business world. The two-year stint she originally foresaw turned into six, during which time she qualified as a financial advisor and started her own business. After six years, Kirsty was ready to leave London, so she moved to SA. 'It was time to find some sunshine,' she says. In 2008,