

Sponsors of

THE BOSS

It's just possible that without his mother persuading him as a 16 year old to go for a job interview in Hove to become an accountant, Martin Pollins would not have ended up starting his own firm, financing films or creating products for accountants and other professionals.

"My mother made the decision," said Mr Pollins, who was born in London but has lived for most of his life in Sussex.

"She suddenly announced she had made the appointment for the interview and I said 'Fine'. Five years later, my articles were finished."

He worked in London for about seven years qualifying as a chartered accountant in 1964. From 1967 until 2005, he was the senior partner at the accountancy firm PRB Martin Pollins which was originally in Hove but moved to Haywards Heath in 1990. Mr Pollins sold his interest in the firm to his fellow partners in 2005.

While he was there in 1984, the Office of Fair Trading lifted the restrictions on accountants advertising and marketing their services. "It wasn't possible to do that before then," Mr Pollins remembered. "We would have been before the ethics committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants quicker than saying Jack Robinson."

A few months later, in January 1985, with input from advertising and marketing agencies, Mr Pollins decided to advertise on British television, becoming the first chartered accountancy firm in the UK to do so. "Channel Four offered us an unbelievable deal: six or seven slots a night for six or seven weeks for about £6,000 because they wanted someone to have the courage to show what might be possible. It was very successful, but we did not capitalise on it as much as I would have liked because we did not have the resources to do so."

Making use of all his experiences to date, in 1986 Mr Pollins launched The CharterGroup Partnership, a public company which was the UK's first network of accountants. "CharterGroup provided its members with resources such as brochures and training which they needed for the new environment. In a short period, we had about 120 members across the UK." The accounting network was followed by the LawGroup, a similar network for solicitors.

After another ten years, various other ideas came to a head. "This time, I was not prepared to make the ideas available for nothing, which is why I began thinking about Bizezia. Ten years before, e-mails, the web and its associated technology did not exist." In 2005, Bizezia, an online marketing and management tool for accountants and lawyers, was finally launched. "It took nine years to be where we

From the web to the big screen

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are now with Bizezia. Rather like Microsoft with the first version of Windows, all the hard work went into creating the digital products and thereafter it was all about selling. We employ five people, and if we have another 1,000 customers tomorrow, it won't really cost us anything because everything is done via the web."

Bizezia makes its money by licensing products. Bizezia will provide an accountancy firm with a code which allows the firm to put Bizezia products on its website. "But they only have access to the products during the time they have paid for."

Bizezia publications provide accountancy firms and others with personalised products created in a matter of seconds by marrying pdfs to make it look as though the Bizezia original is a publication of the firm. Bizezia's current turn-

over is about £500,000, but Mr Pollins expects that to grow rapidly. "We have a big sales push on. We are hoping to license our publications free of charge to a large newspaper with a business club so their members can have access. These members will be encouraged to put Bizezia's tools on their websites and pay for them."

In addition to Bizezia, Mr Pollins is operations director of Movision Entertainment, a UK based film production and financing company. In the two tax years ended 5 April 2004, the sponsors behind Movision raised about £50 million from high net worth individuals with the objective of providing them with tax relief for investment in British films.

At the time, it was the largest film production tax fund of its kind and commissioned The Merchant of Venice with Al Pacino.

AGE:
69

DRIVES:
Mercedes CL 600

LIVES:
Newick,
East Sussex

STATUS:
Married

FAVOURITE MEAL:
Fish and chips

FAVOURITE BOOK:
"The Innocent Man" by John Grisham

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MARTIN POLLINS