

Mankind

Hilary Andrews comes from a family of entrepreneurs. Her father ran a building and landscaping company and her sister ran a public-relations company. Hilary wanted to be a beauty therapist so she left sixth form college to go to a private college ahead of going to work in a beauty salon. However it was not too long before she opened her own salon in Woking, in 1983. But Hilary got bored and felt the insecurity of self employment, so in 1990 she took a teacher training course and then a degree in education, going on to teach beauty and holistic therapy in Farnborough in England. She then got a job in a company distributing products to the spa industry, working in their mail order department. It was here that she came upon the idea for her business. Men kept asking for advice on products for them to use on their skin, so she decided to research the emerging market for men's skin care products. She quickly decided there was a real business opportunity in setting up a mail order company selling just men's cosmetics. The market for male grooming products was growing rapidly but, more importantly for her idea, many men preferred not to visit shops.



However Hilary was by now 38 years old and she found the prospect of setting up on her own daunting. Luckily she was able to find a business partner, Paul Jamieson, through a mutual friend. She enthused him with her business idea and he decided he was willing to back her. But more money was needed and the banks and private investors were not convinced. They thought the idea untried and untested and did not believe men would buy grooming products in this way. Not to be put off, Hilary remortgaged her house, raising £10,000 and Paul put in £20,000 of his own money. Hilary managed to borrow a further £20,000 from two family members and two friends. With £50,000 of capital *Mankind* was launched in 2000.

First Hilary secured the products she wished to sell by entering into distributor agreements for a range of selected products. Then she bought mailing lists and printed some 100,000 catalogues. Friends and family helped stuff the catalogues into envelopes and mail them out. Sufficient sales came from this first mail shot to establish the business and it quickly developed its own mailing list. But it was through developing a web site and exploiting the internet market that the business really took off. This was a key decision that allowed it to grow, just as on-line shopping was becoming popular.



We knew here were guys who wanted these products but didn't want the hassle of going to a shop and speaking to a consultant. The internet has made it easy to buy products that were previously difficult to get and enabled us to give people a lot of information about them. About 99% of our sales are through the internet now. We have watched things develop very quickly in both the male grooming and the internet market. But we have tried to control the growth so we don't try to run before we can walk. I'm a cautious person who looks at the downside of things.

It's about being really focused on what you do... You have to watch the bottom line constantly. It's not about starting a business and getting yourself a nice car; it's

about starting a business and having a really solid model that works....What motivates me is being successful in an industry I love. It's a rewarding thing to give people confidence.
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By 2005 Mankind's turnover had grown to almost £3 million – and Hilary was married with a young son.

Case questions:

1. Which of the character traits of the entrepreneur does Hilary exhibit?
2. What other influences can you detect?
3. How much of the success of this venture is down to the right idea at the right time?