

## Case Study

It took just three hours on a 'Women in Digital Entertainment' (WiDE) course to help 34 year old Deborah Westrup gain the confidence and direction to take her own show to the Edinburgh Festival.

Deborah gained wide-ranging experience working as a freelancer in TV: from her early career as a production assistant and researcher, she moved through to producing and directing roles. Not content with that, she developed her acting ability and, in her infrequent spare time, wrote her own material. "I had what I thought was a pipe dream of setting up my own production company and producing my own work," she says.

But everything changed with the birth of Julia, now 13 months old. Deborah says "Julia is wonderful, but being a mum meant that I just couldn't carry on working in TV as I once did. It is so full-on, and part time work is incredibly hard to get." Deborah continued to teach and worked from home as a researcher, but was worried that her skills would atrophy, or that she wouldn't be able to keep up. "In the TV world, the more multi-skilled you are, the more employable you are," she says.

Deborah turned to the WiDE initiative for support. She says "Initially, I thought WiDE would fill the skills gap for me, but it has been so much more." She took the free of charge Final Cut Pro course, which enabled her to extend her editing skills to complement existing camera expertise. Final Cut Pro is a high-end editorial tool created by Apple Computers, with which users can edit video. Deborah says "Learning this enabled me to reinforce my skills while I was looking after Julia and dabbling in pieces of work that came my way."

But having so many skills was confusing. Deborah says "I asked myself a thousand times, what am I? Teacher, producer, director, researcher, writer or actor?"

Deborah then attended a free WiDE Coaching session, with Sandra Coley of Chrysalis. Deborah says. "It was such a luxury to talk about my professional and private life. In three hours I had a completely different mindset."

During the session, Deborah came to see her experience as not a piecemeal, ad-hoc array of skills, but as a perfectly balanced and unique professionalism. "I realised that I had everything I needed to produce my own work. I was a professional that understood, and could do, every aspect of the business. I had all the skills and knowledge."

Deborah says "Sandra helped me recognise my own passivity. Previously I had been waiting for people to approach me rather than creating opportunities.

"It gave me clarity and focus," she says. "It led me to realise that what I wanted was to develop a project on Ibsen that I had been playing with for a while."

"I had always dreamed of taking a show to the Edinburgh Festival, but never thought that it would happen,"

"Coaching enabled me to prioritise the tasks I needed to do and the order I had to do them, to identify the psychological and logistical barriers to my dream and to plan how to overcome them."

Deborah has secured funding to take her show "Nora" inspired by Ibsen's "A Doll's House" for a two week run during the Ibsen Season at the Hill Street Theatre at the Edinburgh Festival. "I'm using the full range of my skills to get the actors and dancers together, to write the show and direct it. I'm acting in it, too." Her coaching session made Deborah realise the value of all her skills, with the result that she feels capable of anything. "I'm now doing voiceover work and have the confidence to market myself as a voiceover artist. I'm creating opportunities for myself. I feel that this is only the beginning....."