

The relative benefits

by Linda Whitney

BUSINESS can be a family affair. Many franchises and outlet opportunities welcome approaches from family members — but think hard first, for it can also be a route to rows at home.

'Going into business with family members can be very satisfying, and my clients often talk about the sense of pride and belonging they feel as a result,' says Mark Evans, head of family business at Coutts bank.

'At the same time, there is more at stake. It is not just the business that can suffer if communications break down. Family members can feel trapped and relationships can be ruined if they are not properly managed.'

'Think carefully about whether you work well together,' says David Truby of lawn care franchise Greensleeves. Greensleeves franchisees include several pairs of brothers and two father-and-son teams, plus one where a dad works with his son and two daughters.

Remember experiences of working together on joint projects such as family holidays. If it was hell, think twice about setting up in business together. Also evaluate your family's business skills. Some people are good at administra-

tion, some prefer marketing and others are more practical types.

'Check you have the range of complementary skills to suit the business you want to set up, and once you start, respect each other's expertise and let them get on with their job,' says Mr Truby.

It helps if your roles are firmly defined, says Mark Ryland, who, with his wife Liz, owns the Mr Electric franchise in south-west London. Mark is a former electrician, while Liz had accountancy training.

Mark says the secret of the couple's success is their ability to work closely but in different roles: 'Liz looks after the financial side while I take on a more practical role.'

Family businesses are not always a bed of roses, as Mark adds: 'As with any company, we have had disagreements, but unlike other business partners, you don't have the opportunity to cool down, spend some time apart and think it through.' Mr Electric franchises cost £16,000.

■ MR ELECTRIC 01527 578 157.

IT'S holiday time, but with a travel business you could be taking holidays all-year round. Getting into the travel agency business is expensive unless you start with an established name, which already has the necessary bondings. 'ATOL and ABTA bonding normally costs £60,000 between them, but we hold these on behalf of members,' says Louise Smith of Global Travel Group. Global is seeking new



■ TRUDY and Nick Route run a Garage Conversion Company franchise in Bedford, and their team includes their three sons, Michael, 33, Gary, 25, and 23-year-old Andrew.

'Within six months of Nick and I starting the business, the boys were on board,' says Trudy (pictured with Nick and Gary). 'It makes sense because Michael is a carpenter, joiner and double glazing fixer, Gary's a plasterer and Andrew is a plumber.' Trudy uses her sales experience, Nick concentrates on surveys and the boys are part of the conversion team.

'Working as a family has benefits. You trust each other, and everyone is more committed because it's personal,' says Trudy. 'Customers like it — some have chosen us because we are a family business.'

Trudy advises others thinking of working with their family: 'Look at the skills you all have and find a business that will use them all.'

Phil Bateman of the Garage Conversion Company, where franchises cost £23,995, says: 'We welcome family franchisees.'

■ GARAGE Conversion Company
0800 587 0262 Greensleeves 0808 100 1413.

Royal Caribbean International. You do not require any travel trade experience and training includes a familiarisation trip to Florida for a Caribbean cruise. 'You need enthusiasm for travel and general business awareness,' says Geoff Ridgeon of Go Cruise, where set-up costs £13,995.

■ GLOBAL Travel: 0870 429 8100; Go Cruise: 01473 292 019.

members to sell travel from home, and it provides training and access to its bookings systems and marketing support. Start-up costs £29,995.

The cruising sector is the fastest-growing part of the travel trade. Go Cruise, part of Fred Olsen Travel, is looking for more franchisees to work from home selling cruises with big names such as Fred Olsen, Carnival and

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