

## **WOMEN IN FRANCHISING – Catherine Tang, Chemex International**

“It’s hard work, but I love it!” says Catherine Tang, Chemex International franchisee, and former legal secretary, “It certainly beats sitting in an office day after day!”

Catherine confesses that the only thing she was worried about when she signed up for her van based franchise was whether she would actually manage to drive the vehicle. “I was really excited about the franchise, and was looking forward to getting started, but up until then I’d only driven a small car,” she recalls. “But once I got behind the wheel, I thought ‘Of course I can do this!’ and I’ve not looked back since!”

After eighteen years as a legal secretary, Catherine decided a change was needed and took a job as sales negotiator for an estate agent. She found out that she loved dealing with different people every day and had a natural ability to sell. Just a year later she decided that what she really wanted was to work for herself.

Having visited the National Franchise Exhibition and researched likely opportunities, Catherine had narrowed the field to van based franchises. “I wanted to be out and about looking for business rather than waiting in premises for people to come to me,” she explains. “Of course, there is also the advantage of low overhead for a business start-up.” Catherine considered several alternatives before deciding that Chemex International was the perfect fit for her.

“We looked at a newly launched franchise, but in the end we felt reassured by Chemex’s proven track record. Also, the other business was selling to a particular well-defined market sector, whereas the products Chemex sells are used by just about every business, in every sector, every day!”

Chemex International is the UK’s leading cleaning and maintenance products provider, established since 1985, with over 100 franchisees operating successfully in 10 countries. Chemex franchisees provide a wide range of high quality products direct to repeat order customers from a customised vehicle, fully equipped as a mobile showroom. In an environment increasingly governed by strict Health & Safety legislation, Chemex franchisees find service, not just product range, is key to a successful, long-term business.

Catherine has been in business for herself only a few months, launching earlier this year, but already she is considering future expansion. “I’ve had great training and support from Chemex,” she affirms. “The business development team have worked closely with me to ensure that I get off to a great start, but ultimately I’m under no illusion that the success of my

business is down to me. There is no doubt that the potential for this franchise is huge, my business is growing well already and I'm quickly establishing myself on my exclusive territory. The plan within a few years is to build a bigger business with several vehicles on the road, servicing a more extensive client base. However, for the time being, I'm very happy that everything is going to plan."

As for the question of women in franchising, Catherine is quick to point out that everything is down to the individual. "You get a few double takes when people see it's a woman driving the van," she smiles, "but truly it's down to individual qualities such as determination and commitment rather than gender!"