

28

Artizian Catering Services

"I was definite about what we'd achieve," says Alison Robinson, founder of this Reading-based caterer. "Year-on-year we were spot-on. It's about getting the right contracts and a lot of referrals. We're food-driven, financial and creative..."

"Happy employees create happy customers," she continues. So that's

why Artizian has a "Minister of Excellence" and a "Minister of Fun." Robinson: "We follow a modern empowering management style, pay above-market rates and focus on senior management training through Open University courses."

The hard part? "Introducing formalities at the right stage of growth. We've moved from verbal

communication – which is inefficient and gives a licence for interpretation – to putting things in writing."

Robinson (pictured on the left with her FD Jackie Brain) expects a £6m turnover this year. "The economy is volatile and a lot of our contracts are in the technology sector but of the contracts up for review this year we have retained all but one."



"I WANTED TO GROW BUT NOT LOSE THE INTIMACY"

Women-run businesses feature strongly in this year's Hot 100. The female-dominated sectors include recruitment, catering and clothing.

Co-founded by Denise Cloughlin, **Action Medical** (*number 22*) supplies locum and permanent medical staff to the NHS, private hospitals and other medical firms. She was working with the BBC World Service when she identified locum recruitment as a growth market. Seeing further potential for the Bath-based business, she and partner Chris Rogers sought backing. They recently sold 100 per cent of the business to Tribal Group, an architectural firm that builds hospitals, and are "being left to run things as they were."

Alyssa Lovegrove and Caroline Clark were big fans of non-UK childrens' brands, so they set up a mail-order business, the **Great Little Trading Company** (*number 34*) to import the labels. McKinsey-trained Lovegrove and corporate lawyer Clark were surprised with the early growth. Lovegrove: "We expected £5m, but then when we got it we knew we had to put more structure in place. People management wasn't something I had done much of. We were better prepared for other aspects of the job. I wanted to grow but not lose the intimacy. The business is so close to my heart."