



PROWESS *Profile*

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NEWS:

*Making Waves in Brighton –
Prowess Annual Conference*

RESEARCH:

*Who Benefits? – challenges
HM Treasury to rethink
benefits system*

Regions:

emda's Star Prizes

WORLDWIDE:

*Trilateral Alliance –
UK, US and Canada
in discussions*

MY WEEK:

Tricia Dinan

*The role of women
is fundamental to
our aspirations for
increased productivity*

*Paymaster General
Dawn Primarolo MP*

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

COMMENT



“Doing something worthwhile well” is a term I’ve found sums up the aspirations of almost all the women I’ve met who run their own business. So it shouldn’t surprise us, to find that women make up almost half of social and community entrepreneurs; the majority in many regions. The latest UK Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report finds that there are indeed more people involved in socially orientated ventures than there are ‘traditional’ entrepreneurs. Of the latter, women have slipped to less than half the number of men involved in setting up a traditional enterprise.

GEM looks at nascent and baby businesses, so it’s an early indication of potential business development. It’s based on a robust sample of 22,000 interviews conducted last summer – just after the launch of the DTIs Strategic Framework for Women’s Enterprise. The Framework sets out an agenda for policy and action to significantly increase the numbers of women starting businesses in the UK. It’s too early to tell whether the ambitious targets it set are beginning to be met. We do know that there is now a committed network of individuals and organisations working across the UK toward its goals. The level of motivation at our first Annual Conference was extraordinary and as I travel around the country, I see this legion is spreading the message from the bottom up. We are getting there, but women are still too often peripheral to local, regional and national enterprise policy: the first thing to go when funds are squeezed.

GEM suggests that regional entrepreneurship policies are beginning to have an effect on entrepreneurial attitudes, but this is predominantly among men. Women are the largest untapped market, but appear to be untouched by those well-resourced policies. Compared to men, women are a third less likely to either know an ‘entrepreneur’ or have confidence in their own skills to start a business. Perceptions are undoubtedly an issue. GEM’s focus on social and community enterprise suggests that women are just as enterprising as men, where work and values coexist. That’s something to focus on and to build on.

Erika Watson
Executive Director, Prowess

PROWESS Conference takes the Strategic Framework forward

‘Women and Enterprise: Making Waves’

Brighton 5-7 November 2003



Erika Watson, Baroness Jay, Isabella Moore CBE,
Dinah Bennett, Dawn Primarolo, Tricia Dinan

The first annual Prowess Conference provided the opportunity for over 200 UK and international delegates to discuss the practical implementation of the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise. The three-day programme allowed for a combination of keynote addresses, round table discussion, workshops and networking. The event started with a bang on Bonfire Night and ended in celebration as the first Flagship Award winners were announced.

Speaking at the start of the conference, the Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP, Paymaster General said, "the Treasury fully accepts that the role of women is fundamental to our aspirations for increased productivity", whilst former Leader of the Lords, Baroness Jay, stated "there is a need for female-specific business support schemes, including better designed financing packages, to meet the specific needs of women going into business."

Conference saw significant progress towards achieving the objectives of the Strategic Framework when regional implementation was discussed during breakout sessions. Strong messages and several commitments were recorded which would eventually see the appointment of regional coordinators, regional conferences and the adoption of regional women's enterprise strategies. SEEDA and emda are already committing resources to move the objectives forward.

Conference was sponsored by NatWest, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Bank of Scotland, SEEDA and the Phoenix Fund.



...a combination of keynote addresses, round table discussion, workshops and networking...



Prowess Annual Conference 2004 will take place from 9th-11th November at the Nottingham Royal Moat House Hotel



FLAGSHIP AWARDS

Good Practice just got better

How the Prowess Flagship Awards help to raise the standards in women's business support

For 'good practice' to have any long term lasting effect it must be measurable and capable of replication. It is no longer acceptable to claim the mantle of 'best practice' without the evidence to back it up. This is why Prowess has developed the Flagship Awards standards; a process for measuring and improving member services for women business owners.

The best practice standards were developed in consultation with the early membership and the initial criteria were devised by the Prowess Board, which is representative of the membership. The criteria were then piloted with initial members and were revised and refined twice before being adopted.

The process of developing the standards resulted in the identification and adoption of 12 core standards for Business Support Providers and 13 core standards for Network Organisations. Prowess believes these standards represent the minimum best practice criteria for women's enterprise support. The standards are designed to be measurable and transparent as well as being as objective as possible, with numerical targets for some elements.

How the assessment works

All Prowess members are offered the opportunity to undertake an initial telephone service delivery assessment interview, which takes on average between 45 and 60 minutes, and is undertaken by one of a bank of consultants with extensive experience of women's enterprise support. A report is produced as a result of this interview and sent to the Prowess member organisation to agree its accuracy. All reports identify

the organisation's strengths and areas of excellent service as well as areas of activity that could be improved or developed to offer better women-friendly enterprise support services.

The reports are assessed and verified by the Prowess Board quality sub-group and a final report, with recommendations for service development, is sent to the Prowess member organisation for their information and action.

For those organisations which appear to meet all the best practice standards a verification visit is arranged. The purpose of the verification visit is twofold; firstly to ensure that there is clear evidence of the quality of service being delivered and the outcomes of the service (for example statistical evidence that at least 40% of business support provider members clients are women) and secondly to see the organisation firsthand to learn more about their ethos, culture, meet the staff and clients and generally observe the organisation in action.

A detailed report is written clearly showing how the organisation meets the best practice criteria and giving examples of the evidence supplied at the visit, and the Prowess Board quality sub-group confirms the award of Flagship status.

Results so far

As at February 2004, 54 business support organisation members have had service delivery assessments completed and 15 are still in the process of being assessed. Of the completed assessments six members have been identified as meeting the best practice criteria and have been awarded "Flagship Member" status.

The Prowess Flagship Awards are part of a portfolio of services and products that Prowess is developing in conjunction with their membership and the Department of Trade and Industry. Other elements of the Prowess portfolio will include training initiatives for organisations, facilitated toolkits, opportunities for networking and sharing good practice, consultancy services, and the further development of the Prowess Flagship programme to include benchmarking networks.

Three Network members have had service delivery assessments completed and seven are still in the process of being assessed. Of the completed assessments two members have been identified as meeting the best practice criteria and have been awarded "Flagship network member" status.

The process has brought about many benefits other than the award of Flagship status. Many of the organisations have found their Service Delivery Assessment report very useful in reviewing their services and planning positive future developments.

Future developments which will come from the Flagship process include a Best Practice Benchmarking Network to enable members to collaboratively measure and improve performance.

Award Winners

Flagship Awards where presented to the following organisations at the Prowess Annual Conference in November 2003:

Best Practice Standards for Business Support Providers

- Quaker Social Action's Street Cred Programme
- Bolton Business Ventures
- Women's Business Development Agency
- Train 2000
- Bolton Metro's Ethnic Minorities Business Service
- WEETU

Best Practice Standards for Business Women's Networks

- Women Into the Network
- Women's Business Network (North West) Ltd

For Best Practice information call Sarah McPherson on: 01603 762355



1. Flagship winners 'on the crest of a wave'

2. Bolton Metro and Bolton Business Ventures
3. Women's Business Network (North West) Ltd and Train 2000
4. Women Into the Network, Durham Business School
5. West Midlands-based Women's Business Development Agency



PARTNERS' PROGRESS

Women in Accountancy

The stereotypical image of the accountant is being challenged according to the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The past eighteen years have seen a four-fold increase in the number of female ACCA members, almost 40% of the 36,000 worldwide membership. A welcome development both for the profession and for the diverse needs of small business clients.

The ACCA first opened its doors to female accountants in 1909 and in 1980, was the first international accountancy body to elect a female President. The ACCA now devotes much time to focus on the particular needs of women in business. A recent seminar on 'Women in self-employment' enabled the organisation to make policy recommendations to Government. Future plans include conducting research on



access to finance – examining why women receive one third of the funding as compared to men when setting up in business. ACCA also has a number of 'Women's Societies', which organise events for ACCA members, students and guests.

Over half of ACCA's members in the UK work in a small business or service a small enterprise and when it comes to small business advice, owner-managers are 10 times more likely to consult an accountant than a bank manager. ACCA members help with business planning, growth strategies, cashflow management, sourcing funding and retirement planning. As well as being experts in giving financial and business advice, many accountants are also small business owners themselves. A positive advantage for all business owners.

To find a Chartered Certified Accountant in your area and for further information, visit ACCA's website, www.accaglobal.com or telephone 0141 582 2000.

East Midlands women to take a starring role

The East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*) has shown its commitment to economic development through women-led firms by launching 'Women in Enterprise' as one of its 'star prizes'.

Sarah Davies, Economic Inclusion Adviser for *emda* explains, "In the East Midlands we have set ourselves the ambitious target of becoming a top 20 European Region by the year 2010. Our Regional Economic Strategy is the route map that plans how we will get there but we recognise that there will be much more to this journey. As we move forward we have identified a number of key symbols of change, 'star prizes', that embody the spirit of our ambitions and will make a real and visible change to the economic landscape of our region. The 'Women in Enterprise' initiative is one of these 'star prizes'.

emda believes that its long term ambition to increase the number of women-owned businesses will be achieved by working with a range of



trusted intermediaries who can bring specialist advice and support to women entrepreneurs. By creating the post of Regional Coordinator in partnership with Prowess, *emda* plans to embed the targets and principles of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework into its regional strategies, action plans, fora and organisations. The plan is to create a coherent framework which will enable *emda* to work effectively with relevant partners across the region to deliver key economic targets.

For further information on *emda*'s work around women in enterprise contact Sarah Davies on 0115 9888385 or e-mail sarahd@emd.org.uk

emda Board member Valerie Dwyer is championing the work with the region's women entrepreneurs. Valerie is the director of her own company, Lincolnshire Legends Food Company Ltd and is co-founder of business consultancy Strategic Insight. "Promoting enterprise is a key part of *emda*'s work not least because the vast majority of new jobs being created across the region are generated by new business ventures."



POLICY LAUNCH

Who benefits?

Not women who want to move from unemployment to self-employment according to a recent report.

Dr Susan Marlow examines the findings of *Who Benefits?*, a report published jointly by the New Economics Foundation (nef) and Prowess. The report investigates how the current benefits system acts as a barrier to aspiring female entrepreneurs currently dependent on welfare provision.

Starting a new enterprise is risky. Success so often depends on a person's time commitment, resources, positive support from family and friends and access to professional advice. Research carried out for this report concluded that many of these 'success factors' are denied to women who try to enter self employment from the benefits system.

Although the focus of the New Deal is on the transition from welfare to work, the evidence presented within **Who Benefits?** shows that this support



Dr Susan Marlow of De Montfort University examines the findings of *Who Benefits?*

mechanism is failing women, particularly lone parents, who seek to enter self-employment. The report exposes the way the current benefits system is only really working for the standard "male" model of full time employment or unemployment. Women who want to work have to factor in care commitments involving variable hours as well as the uncertainties of future income and the report shows how the rigidities of the benefits system can discourage them from making the transition to self-employment. For example;

- the very short 'test trading period' of 26 weeks, after which benefits are withdrawn. Most new small businesses require at least 18–24 months to become established.
- Loss of benefits when moving into work and delays in assessments and payments when moving from unemployment to in-work benefits means the risk and uncertainty are often too great for people with no savings and dependents. Equally, assessing tax and child care credits for those in work are based on previous or forecast earnings. Income from self-employment is volatile and unpredictable making this calculation extremely difficult.
- Allowable earnings on benefits are so low they act as a major disincentive to starting a business and this, combined with the limit on working hours, prevents a gradual supported move into self-employment.
- Self-employment is generally presumed to be full-time which may not be true for women. This, and the potential need to move in and out of different benefits according to changing circumstances, affects eligibility and access to in-work benefits.



- Childcare is virtually unavailable whilst on benefits and only 70% of costs are covered through in-work benefits.
- The government's efforts to formalise the informal economy may also destroy some of the non-economic benefits that women in particular get from informal transactions. These play an important role creating support networks in disadvantaged areas, and aiding people back into work.

If government is serious about its stated aims of reducing poverty and social exclusion, it needs to conduct a radical review of current policy. **Who Benefits?** calls for a wide-ranging review of the benefits system and some immediate changes to properly support women and men who need to work in a flexible way.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded from www.prowess.org.uk/press/press.asp

Transatlantic Developments

An update from Jackie Brierton, Policy Adviser to Prowess who is currently seconded as an adviser to the SBS's Ethnic Minority & Women's Enterprise Unit

In the first issue of Prowess Profile, Julie Weeks wrote about the background to women's entrepreneurship development in the United States. Julie, Executive Director of the National Women's Business Council (NWBC), in Washington DC, was also a speaker at the launch of the DTI's Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework in May 2003 - and highlighted the benefits of sharing information and good practice internationally.

So what's happened since then? Perhaps the most significant transatlantic development is the agreement in January 2004 to form a Trilateral Alliance on women's entrepreneurship with the US and Canada. Endorsed by Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (and Minister for Women), the main objectives of the Alliance are to exchange best practice and share ideas on a range of women's enterprise issues.

With backing in the UK from the Small Business Service (SBS) and the Treasury, the key short-term aim is to influence the outcome of the forthcoming OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Ministerial Conference on Entrepreneurship, taking place in Istanbul in June. For the first time, women's entrepreneurship is a key theme within the conference, and policy recommendations for its development are expected to be agreed among the 80-plus countries attending. In parallel with the Ministerial Conference, a 'Women's Entrepreneurial Best Practices Forum' will take place, also in Istanbul.

The idea for a Trilateral Alliance was originally mooted by Project Tsunami in the States. Tsunami (Japanese for 'tidal wave') is a non-profit corporation based in Atlanta, Georgia. It came out of two previous international conferences organised by the OECD in Paris in 1997 and 2000. Tsunami's CEO, Virginia Littlejohn, is also a Senior Adviser to the OECD on women's entrepreneurship and is currently actively working on the agenda for this year's Istanbul event. Tsunami's core strategies are familiar themes and include: women's enterprise research, data and statistics; entrepreneurial education and training; access to finance; access to networks and markets; and, importantly, constituency building and advocacy.

The Canadian connection originally came in the shape of Sam Bulte, an energetic MP in the Canadian Government who chaired the recent Prime Minister's Parliamentary Task Force on Women



(Left to right) Task Force Chair Sarmite (Sam) Bulte, MP; Andrina Lever, the private sector adviser to the Canadian Task Force; Virginia Littlejohn, Tsunami's Co-Chair and CEO; and Julie Weeks, Executive Director of the National Women's Business Council in the US. The group met the day after release of the Task Force Report to map out collaboration between Canada, the US and Tsunami prior to Istanbul. All serve on Tsunami's Global BrainTrust.



Meeting at the Willard Inter-Continental Hotel in Washington, DC - the place where the term 'lobbying' was born in the late 1800s. Tsunami Co-Chairs Virginia Littlejohn (far left) and Ambassador Linda Tarr-Whelan (far right) had breakfast on April 30 with Astrid Pregel, then the Canadian Consul General in Atlanta, GA, USA; Member of Parliament Sarmite Bulte, Chair of the Task Force; Andrina Lever, the private-sector adviser to the Task Force; Senator Catherine Callbeck, a Task Force member and former Premier of Prince Edward Island; and Member of Parliament Karen Redman, a Task Force member. The idea of Trilateral cooperation between Canada, the UK and the US was born at this meeting.

Entrepreneurs. Sam visited the UK in April 2003 and met with DTI officials to update on Canadian developments – and it was clear that there was a lot of valuable experience to be gained from Canada on the women's enterprise front. The Task Force reported in October 2003 and called on the federal government to create a new 'Office of Women's Business Ownership' (which already exists in the States) and to expand its programmes for women entrepreneurs across Canada. It specifically recommended the creation of Women's Business Centres across Canada to provide better access to training, financing, marketing and other business services, with the centres becoming 'hubs for sharing ideas and expertise'. The report's findings were informed by more than a thousand women entrepreneurs who responded to the Task Force with feedback on their experiences.

US Handbook

Another current US development is the development of a new 'US Handbook of Case Studies, Best Practice and Recommendations'. Sponsored by the NWBC and Project Tsunami, the contract to develop the handbook has been awarded to the women-owned research firm Barrera Associates and is expected to be launched at the OECD conference in June. They are seeking organisations and initiatives which have a track record of achievement and are either providing direct assistance to women business owners or improving the environment for women's enterprise development generally.

Foundation funds

It's worth noting that initial funding for Project Tsunami came from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which funds innovative programmes that foster entrepreneurship and which has supported a number of women's entrepreneurship initiatives in the States. There is no real equivalent of the Kauffman Foundation in the UK and, in conjunction with tapping the corporate market, this is a funding gap that needs to be filled if we want to encourage innovative women's enterprise developments in the future.

Visitors to the UK

Recent visits to the UK from prominent players in the States include Linda Tarr-Whelan, Co-Director of Tsunami and

Chair of the first Transatlantic Summit on women's entrepreneurship in London back in 1999. Wendy Werkmeister, President of the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative, and also Vice-President of the Association of Women's Business Centres, visited in November to speak at the UK Business Incubation conference. And, more recently, the former Director of the US Minority Business Development Agency, Ruth Sandoval, spoke at a conference in Leicester. In future years, we hope the Trilateral Alliance will lead to many more visits - in both directions - with an increase in transatlantic friendships and shared learning.

Getting involved

But how is the 'Alliance' going to work? Well, cyberspace is going to play a key role. Tsunami will provide the technology for 'virtual summits' to be held on different women's enterprise subject areas over the next 12–18 months. And from a UK perspective, we'd like as many people to contribute as possible: policy makers, practitioners, women entrepreneurs and researchers. Prowess members will be given prior notice of the Summits and their themes, and relevant news and reports will be featured on the Prowess web-site.

For further information on the Trilateral Alliance, please contact Jackie Brierton at jackie.brierton@btinternet.com.

Useful References

- 1. The complete Canadian Task Force report can be downloaded from: www.liberal.parl.gc.ca/entrepreneur**
- 2. Recent research and key facts on women entrepreneurs in the US can be found at: www.womensbusinessresearch.org**
- 3. For more information on Project Tsunami, go to: www.projecttsunami.org**
- 4. The US online women's business centre, run by the Small Business Administration (SBA): www.onlinewbc.gov**
- 5. For more information on US women's business centres and events, go to: www.womensbusinesscenters.org**

MEMBER PROFILE

Northern Lights

How Durham Business School's Women Into the Network (WIN) encourages achievable role models.



Durham
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Research has found that achievable, inspirational role models really do play a crucial role in encouraging women to take risks and grow, both personally and professionally. This inspired WIN to produce 'Northern Lights', an annual publication featuring inspiring and enterprising role models from around the North East. Their stories have not only helped motivate women to take the leap to start up, but have also helped to educate support providers and changed or

challenged perceptions of other stakeholders such as bankers.

Take Caroline Hughes for example. Her company, ClickHere, offers training in IT, management and personal development, employs sixteen staff and has offices in Billingham and Sheffield. Seeing her clients gain confidence and new skills adds to Caroline's own self-belief. "I

think it's a very female thing, but in the early days, you always think you're about to be found out! Now I can look around and think, yes, I am as good as this." Then there is Cate Watkinson who found that advice from a fellow woman entrepreneur helped her glass design business to develop. She has transformed from artist to architectural glass designer and looks at what she does from a business rather than an artistic point of view.

"It's all about projecting the right image and being as professional as possible. You need

to give people the confidence to work with you."

'Northern Lights' has proved such a success that a national version is being planned for later this year. Dinah Bennett, Programme Director for WIN believes that such an initiative contributes to growing the culture of enterprise across under-represented groups. "By celebrating the successes achieved by ordinary North East women, we demonstrate that it is quite normal for women to aspire to and run their businesses successfully. A national publication along similar lines will make quite an impact."

WIN are working with other organizations around the UK as part of the EQUAL funded AWE partnership (Accelerating Women's Enterprise) to ensure that mainstream business support is developed to meet the needs of excluded groups of women. The UK-wide publication of role models will help to further their objectives.

Anyone who would like to be featured in this, or subsequent publications, should send details to info@networkingwomen.co.uk



Women Into the Network

Women Into the Network (WIN) is a networking initiative based in Durham Business School. The organisation facilitates the development of women's business and helps to break down the barriers which stand in their way by bridging the gap between the extensive provision of business and professional support available. Since its launch, four years ago, WIN has over 1,500 members. WIN has also been selected as the UK best practice initiative for supporting women's entrepreneurship in the EU commissioned survey carried out by the Austrian Institute for Small Business Research (IfGH).



A Working Week

– with Tricia Dinan – Prowess Chair
and Policy Co-ordinator of Train 2000

Monday

My normal week usually kicks off with a series of advice sessions involving clients who want to set up in business. One in particular needs a loan but time is short to make that vital presentation to the bank. Fortunately we have built up a relatively good working relationship with our bankers and this might just give us the flexibility to sort out this client's problem. Later on, I deliver the evening course on finance and bookkeeping for one of our training associates who is ill.

Tuesday

It's deadline time for that client loan application I've arranged for a business banking representative to act as intermediary on behalf of the client if necessary. Everyone seems reasonably happy with the outcome. It's not always that easy, though. The Wirral based Women's Business Network, of which I am Chair, needs new funding streams and on this occasion I find that the best way to deal with the delicate political situation is to go right to the top for advice. We contact Patricia Hewitt's office at the DTI and discuss the issue in depth. A call to Erika at Prowess also helps. Although my work schedule is stacking up I am determined to find a solution. Eventually it's time to head home to deal with Prowess admin work and papers from the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

Wednesday

My first task today is to examine the income streams for a women's social enterprise, draw up an action plan and make a series of practical suggestions. Then it's on

to a client's furniture shop to discuss the progress of the business. While the client is busy making coffee I find myself involved with a customer who seems to think I am part of the furniture, so to speak. I end up helping to sell her a bench, which amuses our client enormously. I spend the rest of the day writing up social accounting notes. Manage to briefly catch up on the Hutton Inquiry reports.

Thursday

It's back to our very important core activities of helping women set up in business. Today it's a woman from the Sudanese community. We have forged strong links with the black and minority ethnic groups across Merseyside and I think – and hope – that they believe we have integrity in our dealings. Like so many women from all levels of society, she needs encouragement and support to recognise her strengths. Of course, on top of these important one to one sessions with clients, the telephone is ringing endlessly with messages setting up more meetings.

Friday

It's early morning and I am preparing a presentation for a Social Enterprise Network conference today. My message is focused on what social enterprises can do to support and help the establishment of childcare businesses. Most of the delegates know a fair bit about childcare but less about providing business advice. Conference over, I drive to Wilmslow to meet up with one of my brothers who is over from Ireland with friends for a football match. Can't wait to use the hotel spa!

Prowess Resources

Helping you to help your clients

Training Packages

Prowess offers a range of training opportunities for people involved at all levels in women's business support. These include:-

Focus on Women's Enterprise Support

A great introduction, or refresher, to all the key issues and developments in women's enterprise support.

The Gender Lens for Business Support

An intensive and highly interactive one day course looking at the issues facing women in business, how advisers can best support women and what women want from business support.

Sensitivity Training – Best Practice in Monitoring Client Profiles

Helps delegates improve their data collection success so that clients are more satisfied about giving out potentially sensitive information

All these events take place at locations around the UK. To request a full copy of the training programme and to find the most suitable course for your needs contact p.austin@prowess.org.uk

Website

www.prowess.org.uk

The Prowess site is designed to guide visitors to the most appropriate advice for women in a given UK region. The site also provides a press and research area, a Members area and answers to FAQs.



Monthly E-zine – Women's Enterprise (UK) News

Regular digest from Prowess: for organizations committed to excellence in women's enterprise development

The Prowess electronic newsletter is free to subscribers and acts as a briefing for advisers and clients. Information is subdivided for ease of use. Sections include news, events, awards, research, funding, new members and Prowess general information.

To receive the electronic newsletter, send your contact details to admin@prowess.org.uk.

Annual Conference

The second Annual Conference will be held in Nottingham at the Royal Moat House from 9th–11th November 2004. For an information update, visit www.prowess.org.uk/conference



Prowess is a member of the Accelerating Women's Enterprise (AWE) Partnership. Visit www.awe-uk.org.uk for more information



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Prowess has over 120 members, most of whom are business support providers committed to improving their services for women. If you would like to join us go to www.prowess.org.uk/about/join.html for a membership pack. A full list of Prowess members can be found at www.prowess.org.uk/about/memberslist.asp

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