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## BRITAIN'S TOP 100 ENTREPRENEURS 2008

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list of wealth creators

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**"My previous job gave me a level of maturity and the ability to deal with demanding clients"**

## PHILIP NIXON

**From brokering to Chelsea Flower Show gold medallist...**

including arts management, Morris enrolled at KLC School of Design in Chelsea. Before the end of the course, she'd landed her first job.

She founded Studio OHM, a high-end residential interior-design business, with partners Louise Holt (a former banker) and Emma Oldham (who previously ran a design business, Space Boudoir). The transition was smooth. 'Being a lawyer has helped me enormously,' she says. 'Actually, the jobs are quite similar. It's a client-based service job; it's about managing projects and managing relationships. The only difference now is that the subject is more creative.'

In hindsight, she would have embarked on a creative path earlier. 'My advice to students would be to do what you love, not what necessarily pays better. The problem is that there are no opportunities presented to you on a plate in the arts. But I don't think there are jobs for life any more. Law firms no longer offer tenure and this has been quite liberating. It gives you a reason to try something else.'

Nixon, 43, graduated from Newcastle University and went to work for a large oil company before moving into bond sales at various banks. But after 12 years he decided it wasn't for him. 'I had originally wanted to be an architect, but I could see no future. It was the booming '80s and it seemed that if you didn't get in now, it would be gone.'

He would have stayed longer at UBS if his team had not been poached by a Japanese bank, which left him with a sizeable chunk of money. The markets had changed and, in his own words, 'it was smarter to stop trading'.

He volunteered to work at the Chelsea Physic Garden in his free time and soon found his former interests rekindled. 'It reminded me of my original interests in architecture and design.' He enrolled at the Inchbald School of Design in 2003 to do a masters in landscape and garden design, but not without doing the footwork. 'I did a lot of research first by speaking to as many people in the business as I could, and second, reading profiles of major

designers. I didn't go into it blind. I saw there were opportunities to be taken.'

He entered the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2004; by 2005 he had the first of two Chelsea Gold medals, and last year won a Silver Gilt. He now runs a four-strong practice, with jobs spread out from London, Moscow, Geneva and Sweden.

He considers his previous employment essential. 'It helped me hugely. One, it gave me a level of maturity; and second, it gave me the ability to deal with demanding clients. There is an element of unprofessionalism to this business and many think it's only about gardening and not running a business. For this reason, I think clients take me more seriously.'

In retrospect, he would encourage people to take a creative leap. What stops them is often a lack of imagination or unrealistic expectations as to earnings. He has financially caught up with his previous income (in the '90s), though, he says, one should expect a cut in salary, at least initially.