# Amy Interview 2 – 2018

## Amy

So, he has been taking the baby a lot and I have actually been able to get some work done which is good.  There is a lot of people who start businesses when they are working full time simultaneously and I am probably working those hours at the moment so it’s not so bad.

## C

I provide a little info …

## Amy

yeh I do feel like I missed out, I didn't at the time but now I have got another one and I am not going back to work I am quite happy about that.

## C

On reflection then how do you feel about leaving?

## Amy

eh I do get asked this because we do still have a lot of RAF friends still who come and visit or whatever. And they say cause I was RAF through and through how are you finding it?  we were expecting you to be rocking in the corner but I really don't miss it at all. Not at all.  Maybe a year down the line is not long enough and maybe it is going to hit me at some point but so I physically left last April then administravely left last June.  That was my official exit date.  I don't miss the politics, I don't miss having to answer to somebody having no autonomy really, I don't have to put everything through my boss.  I've not been in my comfort zone in a year because that I when the business has really ramped up so I have had to do marketing, I have had to do sales, I've put together accounts spread sheet I've been sorting out stuff with HMRC, I've submitted my VAT returns nothing is in my comfort zone, it is just starting to now you know I have been speaking to buyers at Waitrose and navigating this purely based on advice from people and a bit of guidance. stuff you read on line I've been on a couple of courses but I like that I like a challenge cause my job being a Flight Lieutenant was not challenging me at all. So yeh I just don't have any regrets at all.  My one minor and it is ever so minor I do miss RAF cross country running, cause it was a lovely little team and I do love running and it was nice to be part of the race season and have something to really aim towards in terms of my training and we would go away we went out to Cyprus on a little tour we went to Portugal, we ran in Germany, we ran in Holland so all of that was good fun and then I went away on Snow Eagle last year a week’s skiing, completely free, and it’s that sort of thing I sort of miss that but it’s not worth all the negatives  ?@?@?@.  And my plan is to make lots of money with my business so I can pay for that stuff anyway.  No, I don't miss it at all.

## C

So, going back to that leaving experience is there anything that you would change or do differently?

## Amy

I think my last day was odd because you essentially just walk out of the building and I had already had my dining out party thing, I had already had my leaving do in the mess, and yeh it was, my boss works full time from home and my team weren't in cause they were out on a job so I literally just walked out of Air Command and that was it.  Really odd,

## C

Deflating

## Amy

yeh I don't know how other companies deal with it, I don't know how you would do it differently but my last week at work I could have not been there nobody would have cared I was only there physically doing stuff because I wanted to hand over a decent job to the next person so it was conscientiousness but yeh it was just it was just a bit of an anti-climax I suppose but then I don't know what I'd expect really.  Because the job I was in was incredibly It was a dichotomy I was left to my own devices so in that respect I would go out and visit unit’s and inspect them and it was up to me when I did that and how I did that but in terms in enacting any actual change in the Head Quarters which I thought was quite an important part of the job everything had to go to my boss and he put the kibosh on everything so so my day to day comings and goings I was just totally left on my own so I guess it was just how that job was maybe if you are in a squadron or you are in an air traffic tower it is a bit different. Yeh I just walked out

## C

Nobody there to say good luck, goodbye.  Thank you.

## Amy

No.

## C

It is odd.  I think people get a little bit caught up with what they are doing and forget.

## Amy

But to be fair I had a departures interview with the one star but that was a good month before left because of his diary and I had a departure interview with my Group Captain that was 3 weeks before I left because of his diary so yeh it was just the way it worked out but I just walked out and thought well that is the RAF done.  OK.  And I didn't leave my quarter for about a month about that because we were waiting on our new house coming through cause it was our first house purchase so I was in a quarter not at work on base, well not on base but I was still having to use the med centre and the dentist and that was a bit strange so it was a real weird time, not unpleasant and maybe it was quite nice really cuase it was a staged departure.  Not cold turkey it was like now leave work, then leave your house, you know.

## C

So how did that all make you feel would you say?

## Amy

I think the staged departure thing did make it easier actually I think had we left the quarter the same day that I left work I think it would have taken longer to adjust because I don't normally like change and I was worried I've felt quite discombobulated just moving stations before so leaving the RAF.  So, I was worried but I think having my son to focus on making sure he was alright I think having that house and having to keep my son in nursery on the base I still had to go and have appointments with the doctors whatever, I was still meeting friends who were on base and stuff so it felt ok actually, it was quite nice to be there and not be in work.  To be able to work on my business that was good.

## C

So, if you could go back and give yourself some advice or if you knew somebody else who was going through the process what advice would you give them.

## Amy

you know what just that it will be ok it’s not I think because when you are in you are surrounded generally by people who want to stay in which is my experience or they are in because they literally can't think of what else they want to do.  There is I work with a lot of mem who pay the mortgage so they couldn't take a punt like I have done and start up a business which earns the no money for a year they just couldn't do it so I had a lot of naysayers, a lot of oh you'll be back, so and so came back and lots of compliments, I was doing quite well so I think people were quite surprised you will be back. So, my advice would be you will be absolutely fine.  But what I would say is that I was very thoroughly prepared in terms of my business, so my exit strategy I absolutely knew what I wanted to do.  And I think that motivation overrunned is that a word, over runned? everything else so I was very very focused on the business so maybe that helped a lot.  Where I have seen some friends have some problems when they have left, when they have left and meandered, oh generally I want to do something in project management or generally I think something in finance and they have not been on the right courses, they have not networked properly they have not met the right people where I have networked a lot, I went on every course going and I yeh yeh so that would be my advice actually relax but have a very firm plan.

## C

you mentioned missing the running club, what is it about that that you miss.10:08

## Amy

I liked, I really liked running it’s probably a simple as that and I like having something to work towards so at the moment I am back running a little bit but I have nothing really to work towards I put myself in a race in October but nobody is going to be there to watch me it’s not part of a team. You know I will go and I will try my best but when I was very heavily focused, you know every lunch time I would go out and I would do one of my sessions and I had a proper training plan.  I loved being part of a team I loved it was a really good group, the team were lovely so when we did go away to Cyprus or whatever there wasn't a bad egg in the group we got on really well we had a good laugh we trained really hard together and we were getting quite good and we were starting to nip at the heels of the Army in the inter services  so it was quite nice it was nice representing somebody it was nice to you know I had a chance to get a medal it’s nice to try and get a medal it’s I felt cause I have run since I was 8 it was nice to getting PBs and realising my potential age 30 after I had had a child because I was finally training properly with the right people so it’s a sport that has meant a lot to me throughout my life and I was actually doing it properly and well through the RAF Team cause you had that support network.

## C

Cause you had that support network and people.  Is there anything else that you miss either professionally or personally?

## Amy

Occasionally and it only very occasionally I do miss the fact that my job was quite easy like in the end the only slightly difficult bit was navigating people's personalities and reactions to my audit’s.  Some people were not very happy at all and you have just got to handle that and sometimes they outrank you by quite a lot so that was a challenge but it did it wasn't it wasn't terribly difficult.  Sometimes people were terribly difficult and there was nothing I could do about it so I think that was probably personally challenging.  But I think the job itself was so easy by the end whereas now 12:32 nothing noting is particularly easy. So, I do find myself sat here in front of my sort of my VAT return thinking this is all gobbledygook I'd love to go and do an A1 Assurance visit it’s so easy. Part of me is drawn to the ease of it I guess.

## C

And would you say that your military experience and what you learnt within the military continues to influence you in your everyday life?

## Amy

Yeh yeh definitely.  Even how I parent just how much we live our lives in general.  Like we have got quite a few civvi mates now and we are finding we are quite we are both just a bit more military about things.  Like were not we are both quite flexible, we don't faff, we just get on with it even family members they are a bit more I don't know they ?@?@? things and they are late for things and disorganised so I think my military career still sort of permeates through into my life.  I've held onto a lot of the things I was taught, definitely being on time.  I mean you wold be surprised.  I went to for a Dragons Den interview, audition thing a couple of months ago and I was early, dressed properly and I had come with everything and I was 38 weeks pregnant.  And the woman that auditioned me was so shocked that I turned up with everything, she said oh you are one of the first entrepreneurs we have had today that has actually brought everything.  And I thought This is Dragons Den!  If you can't be prepared for Dragon’s Den you have got no hope. But entrepreneurs tend to be quite airy fairy, head in the clouds so you know.

## C

Why can they never answer any of the questions that they get given.

## Amy

Well I think they want to put people on TV who are good entertainment, who are unprepared.  I think I would be quite boring.

## C

Did it go well?

## Amy

It went really well yeh.  She said they are auditioning for 4 months so she will let me know for filming in October.  So, we will see. It went really really well again I think that is a military thing I mean I prepared, and prepared and prepared and I have briefed some quite high up people I've briefed MPs so I was quite happy to stand up in front of people and talk well I don't think a lot of people get that exposure.  And when they say you have got to give three minutes, well I made sure it was 2 and a half minutes so even if I paused or waffled a bit and it was 2 and a half minutes on the nail. And I had practiced it on so many different people to get feedback so I think that is all military that is the sort of stuff I was taught in the military.

# C

I am going to have to use that in my dissertation I think.

# Amy

I've made the cut!

## C

You have but I need to find a way to anonymise that I will have to turn it into a job interview or something.

## Amy

Well hundreds of people have auditioned for Dragons Den so you know, you know what you need to do but I don't mind.

## C

Well fingers crossed you will have to let me know.

## Amy

yeh I will.

## C

So, what do you think has been the most striking thing about moving into civilian life. That you weren't expecting the thing that surprised you really?

## Amy

I think how much, this is going to sound awful but how much I enjoy spending time with my family. I thought we spent enough time together and my husband was always wanting to spend more time together and I was always no, you have to have your own life and you know I did enjoy my job and I would go off and do things with the running and whatever and I thought that is what I had to do to enjoy myself and I was some boring house wife who never did anything.  Turns out I just really like being in a house which I know I can live in forever with my family and see them every day.  And we spend more time together than a lot of families now so we have gone from one extreme to the other and I absolutely love it.

## C

That is really nice.

## Amy

I thought I thought I would be bored and the thought of being in a house forever I mean I like to move every 18 months to 2 years but I hadn't realised I had not got emotionally attached to anywhere.  I was a little bit sad to leave Lossie and I was a little bit sad to leave Linton and so on but I had never really allowed to get properly attached I have got properly attached to where I am now.  My son is at a local primary school and I have made friends and we go out for drinks and we have got a little WhatsApp group and with my son my baby I go to a little baby group and I have made a really really good little group of friends from that and we go and we go out for drinks and go out with our babies and stuff and we are there for each other at 3 in the morning when they don't sleep.  And there is a local forestry commission forest to us which is huge and there is some amazing mountain biking there one of the baby friends I have made her and I go running every Saturday there.  But I have just really started to make.  There are roots here now in a way I really wasn't doing that before and I hadn't realised I wasn't doing it so I started doing it and my husband has an opportunity with an different airline and it it potentially at Heathrow and and he came home to talk about it and I said are we going to move then and he said no absolutely not and when I thought he did want to move my heart sank I was really really sad in a a way I was never sad about to that extent being anywhere before and yeh my little boy he loves he loves the school he has already got a best friend and he goes to a gymnastic club which he loves down in the town he has got a swimming teacher who is brilliant and you just start making all these ties don't you.  So yeh while I was in the military I was well up for moving yep bring on the next move I've got oh living somewhere permanently it sounds awful and now I am here it’s actually really nice.19:16

## C

Do you identify yourself as ex-military when you meet new people or do you.?

## Amy

Yeh when people ask what do you do for context I say well I left the RAF last year to set up my own business cause if I tend to say well I've set up my own business that is a bit like umm yeh so and it sort of explains why we've ended up here and yeh so I tend to because I've met a few I've met a few veterans by saying that there is a woman at the school who is ex-Army and I have been on a few courses where I have met a few ex-RAF people as well.  there is quite a large veteran community up here actually.

## C

So, would you still say you feel connected to the military in any way?

## Amy

Yes. Yes, I do.  I think I do because my husband was in as way so we will talk about it a lot of our friends are still in and equally a lot have left but we met through the RAF and we have had quite a few people come up to visit us who are still in so yeh I think we have got lifelong friends who we met through the RAF and that's what it has always been about anyway.  The people that is the thing I was concerned about anyway was missing the people.  So, the fact that I am still seeing those people it does make me feel really connected. And I think because I am a business start-up I have been able to use a lot of service charities to get myself going so like ex-forces and the family’s federation I was in their magazine so I still tap into the veteran’s network quite heavily.

## C

What would you say has been your biggest professional challenge?  Obviously, you have been setting up a new business...

## Amy

Oh God so many. Which one? Navigating it all on my own.  If I went back I'd probably do this with a co-founder because the littlest things can take you longest time.  So, you know I'm out for a day doing a VAT return, I am out for a day adjusting my accounts because the profit margins changed.  I'll spend a day faffing with a press release which somebody who knew what they are doing would take half an hour, you know it is just yeh I would really like a co-founder I think that is one of the biggest challenges.

## C

so, working on your own

## Amy

yeh working on my own

## C

and having to learn all those new skills instead of being able to draw on people's expertise.

## Amy

yeh because courses can only go so far and they have been very helpful but it is always very generic information isn't.  Like this is how you sell, this is how website should look for anything this is how social media strategies look if you are running any kind of organisation whereas obviously it needs to be nuanced to my product, my brand and what I am trying to do.  And it is knowing what sells to who it’s knowing it’s I've got two none exec-directors one of whom is a one star who is in the RAF and one of whom is a civvi guy who had just finished his MBA at Harvard and they are both good to tap into but they are both really, really busy.  I've picked 2 incredibly busy people so I think if I had my time again I would either pick a non-exec director or a co-founder who could just give me the time.  But it is difficult because people who are worth their salt are generally only have very good career so it’s about time.  So yeh that has been my challenge.  ?@?@

## C

So, do you think you have had to adapt your professional or your personal behaviour since leaving?

## Amy

Not really no.  I think because I am married to an ex-military person we are both still the same in many respects. Like with our quite dark sense of humour and our swearing.  And we tend to navigate towards friends who are like that so we are friends with civvies who are like that we don't really abide by precious faffy people anyway particularly.  I mean with family you have to don't you but yeh no I think we are quite good at seeking out people who are quite similar so I don't think anything has particularly changed.

## C

So, your main motivation now then what would you say it is and how is that different to what motivated you when you were in the Air Force.

## Amy

I started up the business to ultimately help a charity.  I don't know if I told you all this?

## C

You did, yeh,

## Amy

So that motivation is the same and actually the more I read about what is going on in Nigeria it is always in the foremost of my mind so but I am very driven towards that and my family and making a nice life for them.  I was very focused when I was in on climbing the ladder, career, career, career and I most promote, promote, promote and now I don't really mind what anyone thinks of me.  It’s my business and I will make it a success and that's that.  Whilst when I was in the RAF it was constantly worrying what people thought of you because you need to be thought of very well to get promoted.  yeh I don't do things for bosses or anyone else, it’s all for me.  Which has been a real, real step change I think.  Because to motivate yourself day after day when it is just you. Is hard.  I have managed to do it but it is difficult.  It is very easy when somebody gives you a task to do and you go back to them and say it is done and they go well done.  And it’s quite nice when somebody says well done.

## C

And you miss that you haven't got that.

## Amy

mmmm

## C

Do you think things would have been different if you hadn't stated up your own business so quickly?

## Amy

mmm so what if I had started just a job? 25:41

## C

Or just stayed at home with the children.

## Amy

ohh

## C

yeh you know being pregnant leaving and starting your own business. It’s a lot going on isn't there.

## Amy

I think I think it would have hit me harder, leaving if I didn't have this business that was going well I think had I just left and had a baby I wouldn't be as happy.  I really would have felt that too much of my identity had gone I think.  But I have always been very driven I have always cared about my career so to suddenly well babies is it now for me that is what I am about and leaving the military I think that would have been a very stark … yeh I don't think I would have been as happy.  I think this has given me something to work on something that I care passionately about and fortunately it is going in the right direction.  So yeh definitely having done that I think had I started a normal job I would have thought well why did I leave the military I'm not getting any more time with my family and I am still behind a desk and I am still answering to somebody so a lot of the issues I had while I was in I would still have in a civvi job.  I don't think I would be as happy.

## C

It’s interesting isn't it because that erm that idea of just being a mam and I hate that idea of putting the word just in front of it as well but it is how I feel as well it is like it is not enough and that is not to say that people who do stay at home and that is there focus and their main priority that is not in any way taking from them.

## Amy

No, it’s hard.  Well done them it is bloody hard.

## C

It just wasn't right for me. So, it is interesting.

## Amy

How old are yours?

## C

6 and 7.

## Amy

that must be nice you are getting some sleep.

## C

I would have liked to have had more but I was getting too old and much too knackered.

## Amy

Oh, how old am I now?  I am 32 and I have got 2 and that is enough.  I am going to send him for the snip.

## C

I was 38 when I had Connie.

## Amy

That is no age now, well I feel quite tired at 32.  I don't think I would want to do it much older.

## C

My husband has had the snip, I said off you go.

## Amy

yep it seems to be a military man thing.  A lot of my husband’s friends on his squadron had it done.  yeh it is a very routine thing for him and his mates.  Which I am very glad about.  Yeh he didn't hesitate at all he has booked his appointment which is good. yeh two is enough especially with the business.

## C

General chat28:58

## Amy

So, it is not actually physically made yet. No, I am going out to China, Hong Kong, the end of next month to see the first production.  It has taken an unbelievable amount of time to get to this point when you are making toiletries.  You wouldn't believe it I hadn't believed it I was quite naive but the amount of testing and the consumer testing and then making the specific label colours are correct and getting the samples not hose samples aren't right and that takes 2 weeks each time it yeh an unbelievable amount of faff especially dealing with China.  They are just on a different, for a country which is obviously on a very economically capable they are jut on a different timeline to me things are too slow and yeh anyway they will be available the back end of the summer when I go out there.

## C

So where do you see yourself in about 5 years’ time?

## Amy

In 5 years?  I hope the business will be ready for sale having made a lot of money which is my financial forecast because I would quite like to set up another business and I yeh will be living here with my husband and my boys.  I very much see myself in this area potentially thought about doing something with the reserves Army or RAF but I am not going to lie if I'm making the money I think I am going to be making and I am running my own company with lots of ?@?@? I am not going to go back in as a Flight Lieutenant.  So, if they are serious about yeh we want people from business and industry to come in and work with us and there are entry levels that are wing commander and above I would think about that in a few years.31:18 Depending on how successful I was so I would think about that but I wouldn't go back in as a Flight Lieutenant I couldn't do that now, now that I have been running my own company it would just feel awful. So yeh still living here running this business with hopefully quite a lot of success behind me and then coupled with that I would really like to have the charitable impact that I spoke about I would have lived to have been out to Nigeria and seen how the money has spent by then and have some connection with there no more children.  32:06

## C

So, you have another idea for another business that you would like to do in due course.

## Amy

yeh well I have several ideas.  The reason being when you go for investment they want a five-year exit strategy they want to now are you going to sell the business in 5 years or can they acquire more shares in 5 yeas you very much need your 5-year plan.  And investors very much want to know that you are going to sell up in 5 years I could sell up and still be a huge part of the company but I think what I will probably do is sell up and set up another business I have got several ideas none of which I have got further than an A4 piece of paper and a brain storm so one is an American summer camp style thing here another one is post-natal foods which have lots of iron in them because a lot of people are anaemic and take iron tablets that could be more efficient there is lots of good advice out there but you need to eat three bags of spinage to equate to one black pudding anyway so that is an idea erm oh gosh I had several.  Oh, and HR consultancy cause that is my background.  Who knows.33:24

## C

But these all sort of centre around working for yourself and being your own boss and the drive behind it.

## Amy

yes definitely.

## C

So, what then appeals about going back into the Air Force as a Wing Commander?

## Amy

I think I still like the military. I didn't like my last job but I still like the military so I do like being part of something, the ethos and being around like-minded people it’s a very comfortable place to be I did it for 9 years and enjoyed it I do like the travel, I do like the adventure, once you’re in the opportunities are just I'd even applied for all sorts of different jobs I went 34:25

and worked with Defence Intelligence for a bit I applied for that and worked with that for a bit and there was always stuff coming up that you could go and do and I liked the opportunities is the main thing and being out I don't have access to all those opportunities which at the moment is fine but once I am up and running with the business and I am successful and I I am able to give something back to the military I am able to come and advise or help or like I said I couldn't do it as a Fight Lieutenant.

## C

I can see that in terms of the autonomy you get as you go up the ranks in some ways. yes.  I can appreciate that.  The idea that you can only have one career that you can only do one thing I suppose that is what you are exploring really that there are lots of different things that you would like to do that there are lots of different parts of you that would like to do different things.  But still enjoying what you have done.

## Amy

I think that is our generation isn't it as well.  We are not just going to settle for a career we know we can dip in and out of all sorts of different things.

## C

I suppose the way the Air Force and the military is structuring itself these days you can actually do that.

## Amy

Apparently I haven't really, apparently it is working quite well with cyber so they are taking on cyber specialists as squadron leader or wing commander because they need to pay them that much so they and it’s been mixed reviews sometimes they turn up really scruffy, beards you know but they are so good at they what they do that don't say anything and the old and bold are are questioning saying this is not how the military is supposed to be and I get that they were talking about it when I left they were talking about bringing in people from industry having that lateral level entry so you don't have to go through being a flying officer for how many years.  I don't know where it has got to now but if it does happen then yeh I would like to be involved.

## C

And that is because of the different opportunities that the Air Force gives?

## Amy

yeh definitely

## C

And giving something back to the Air Force?

## Amy

yeh I would quite like to go in and advise and give some of my wisdom from business because it is a completely different world.  So commercially I feel like I am you know I have been speaking to buyers and I have been selling, I've been sorting out logistics I have been doing all that so I think I have got quite a lot of commercial experience now and marketing I have done so much with marketing and a lot of people in the RAF who do RAF marketing jobs don't get that experience but they are heading up the media or whatever.  So, I would quite like to go and be a bit of an expert in something that would be really nice.

## C

That was actually the last question really where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?  I am almost tempted to …….38:16

*chat continues 41:44*

## Amy

I think in the RAF I was just used to being a flight lieutenant I was used to being told what to do and at Air Command certainly just being fairly low and now I am running my own business I just, I'd be far too mouthy yeh I just wouldn't be able to abide with the system in the same way so a flight lieutenant I could never do unless, unless I was on a really small unit.  You know they have some unit’s where the station commander is a flight lieutenant I could maybe do that.

## C

yeh where you are the boss.

## Amy

I don't mean that in an arrogant way I am not always right I get things very wrong in this business but it is new and making all those decisions and erm I have seen some senior officers make some very stupid decisions so I know it is not a rank thing to make mistakes but I think once you have got the confidence to make decisions yourself and to deal with huge amounts of money and to take huge risks.  That confidence never leaves you, well hopefully. and yeh I don't think I could go back to not having all that responsibility.  But yeh like you I think I would always like to keep a connection.

## C

yeh I've got to currently sitting here in a quarter at RAF Wittering so I have got no choice at the moment …..*chat continues* 43:17 now the leaves have grown back on the trees we can't watch live TV.

## Amy

than is so marries quarter.  It’s 2018 but I am not surprised.43:39