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Kim Robinson has been riding motorcycles since she was 16. It's turbocharged her accountancy businesses

WORDS ANNIE MAKOFF-CLARK

A white Honda Fireblade, pink leathers and black Alpinestars boots. That's Kim Robinson's uniform of choice. The founder and MD of two accountancy practices in the East Midlands has never been one to go with the status quo.

Robinson got her first motorbike (a Honda CB50J) at the age of 16. She repaired her second one herself using nothing but a Haynes manual and a lot of determination. She spent her teens working at a motorcycle breaker, selling spare parts.

"I wanted to get a motorbike because I lived in a rural part of Derbyshire at the time and, apart from the odd bus, there was no way of getting around," she explains. "Unfortunately, both my brothers had had a few motorcyclist accidents – one had broken his neck and the ▶

EXCEL'S ANGEL

“I feel free and empowered when I’m riding a bike. It’s dangerous but I’ll never stop!”

other had broken both his arms. Then there I was asking my mum for my first motorbike!”

Frequently leathered

Robinson’s passion for motorbikes has been a constant throughout her accountancy career. Her first job was as an accounts supervisor at East Midlands Airport. She set up her first bookkeeping business in 1989, which became a full-blown accountancy practice, KSR Accountants, in 1997. At the time, she was clocking up around 30,000 miles a year on her bike, which has been a useful ice-breaker with clients. In fact, she got her first client while out on her bike.

“I’d gone in to buy *Motorcycle News* and there was a chap there selling Sky TV,” she recalls. “We got chatting and he told me he was self-employed. I told him he needed a decent accountant. I managed to secure him and a few of his mates as clients.

“We would have meetings at the M1 services, halfway between both of our locations. I always took my bike as it was so much quicker.”

These days, Robinson doesn’t do as many miles on her bike

as she’d like, which is perhaps unsurprising considering that she’s now running two accountancy practices (she set up Jeffrey Rose Accountants in 2016).

Even so, she still finds time to burn rubber at the Isle of Man TT most years – the self-proclaimed ‘fastest road race on the planet’. She also tries to explore Europe by motorbike whenever she can. And the All Japan Road Race Championship is next on her list.

Fast and furious

Robinson also plans to become involved again with Birds on Bikes, the charitable organisation she set up in 2006. The initiative was as much about connecting with other female bikers as raising money for good causes.

“The idea behind Birds on Bikes came about when a door-to-door salesman stopped by my house. He had seen me washing my motorbike and was very surprised when I mentioned my then husband,” Robinson explains. “He assumed I was a lesbian, just because I had a motorbike. It giggled me. We come from



all walks of life – different sexualities, different backgrounds, different professions. So I set up Birds on Bikes to raise the profile of female motorcyclists and raise money for cancer charities. At the time, everyone around me seemed to be developing cancer and I wanted to do something to help.”

Shorts

BOOK

Culture Shift: A Practical Guide to Managing Organizational Culture (out 25 July)
Kirsty Bashforth plans for the illogical and irrational.

BOOK

Ultralearning (out 8 August)
Scott Young offers advice on how to future-proof your career, based on the latest research on learning.

EVENT

AAT: Strategic management accounting and costing (2 September, Bournemouth)
This event will cover all things management accounting.

PODCAST

Scale Up Your Business (weekly)
This podcast flits between interviews with entrepreneurs and practical advice on scaling up.

EVENT

AAT: Accounting for vehicles (5 September, Manchester)
This event will cover vehicle-related tax issues, such as taxable benefits and allowances.

BOOK

How to Write Reports & Proposals (out now)
A must-read by Patrick Forsyth for accountants who are looking to improve their writing skills.



“The idea behind my charity, Birds on Bikes, came about when a door-to-door salesman assumed I was a lesbian, just because I had a motorbike”

The first Birds on Bikes event in September 2006 was a roaring success: around 80 women from across the UK turned up to ride 1,000 miles from Edinburgh to Cardiff, stopping overnight at Jedburgh, Pontefract and Birmingham.

Robinson wasn't prepared for the turnout. "I just saw

this sea of motorbikes and pink – women from across the UK," she says. "It really humbled me. I've got a lump in my throat now just thinking about it. I couldn't believe what I'd achieved in bringing all of us together."

The ride from Edinburgh to Cardiff is now an annual occurrence and other members arrange smaller motorcycle events throughout the year.

Robinson took time out from the charity to focus on other aspects of her life, but she plans to return to it soon. In the meantime, she tries to ride her bike to work when she can.

"Sometimes new clients look me up on Facebook before meeting me and they'll see pictures of me on my bike. After we've had our initial conversation they'll often say 'I love your motorbike!', like they've been wanting to say it all along," she laughs.

Riding into the sunset

And the most memorable place Robinson has ever ridden her bike? "The east coast of Scotland," she says. "To the right of me was the sun setting over the sea and to the left was heather. I was just in awe – I just wanted to stay there. That memory will always stay with me."

"There's a feeling of freedom and empowerment when you ride a motorbike," she says. "You're in your own world but also closer to the elements. It's dangerous, of course, but I'm 54 – I've been doing it long enough. I'll never stop riding." ■

EVENT

AAT: Stress management (7 September, Hereford)
A full overview of how to deal with personal and professional problems in the workplace.

BOOK

The Diversity Bonus (out now)
Scott E Page takes a pragmatic look at the business case for diversity and inclusion, across all areas of business.

EVENT

AAT: Cyber-security (10 September, Liverpool)
Details of the latest cyber-scams, and advice on how to protect your company against them.

EVENT

AAT: AMLR update (12 September, Newcastle)
A refresher course on anti-money laundering for those with previous training.

BOOK NOW

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