

Make the news (and money)

RUPERT MURDOCH did it and so could you. As a way into a career in publishing, some local magazine franchises offer the chance to see if the inky-fingers life is for you.

Some are aimed at people who want to work only part-time, while others demand a full-time commitment. Many are not members of the British Franchise Association (BFA), so check their track record carefully and ask what relationship they have with the association.

Mike Giles, sales director of MyMag, which already has 900 franchisees and is looking for around 2,000 more, says: 'No previous publishing experience is needed. You just need to be enthusiastic and able to get on with people.'

'It is aimed at mums who want to work from home part-time but do something creative. Our franchisees take between four and eight weeks from receiving their packs to publishing their first magazine.'

MyMag is a monthly local magazine sent out to around 2,000 people. The franchise works on a postcode basis and the magazine is filled with adverts and paid-for advertorials from local businesses.

It costs £3,599. There is an optional £60-a-month fee, which gives you a support network, help and training.

MyMag has a sister company, Thebestof.com, a local directory website franchise giving details, including photos, of local traders and tradesmen.

It costs between £8,999 plus VAT and £28,000 plus VAT depending on the size of the town franchise bought, as well as £300 plus VAT a month for ongoing support. It is looking for 200 more franchisees. Free2call is a new

by Rosanna Spero

directory service looking for around 200 franchisees. It is based on a U.S. idea, and all featured firms have a freephone number.

The directory comes out once a year, but franchisees produce a bi-annual diner's guide, which includes free-phone numbers for local restaurants plus copies of local takeaway menus.

It costs £16,995 plus VAT to buy, plus 50 per cent of gross advertising revenue to cover the cost of production and distribution.

MORE established is Primary Times, going out to primary schools seven times a year, which needs only a couple of new franchisees, and its new sister publication Early Times, aimed at antenatal and playgroups, which will be published three times a year.

Primary Times costs £15,000 plus VAT, plus the greater of £750 or 5 per cent of the advertising revenue per issue. Early Times costs £5,000 plus VAT and the greater of £500 or 5 per cent of advertising revenue.

Stephen Edwards, managing director of Primary Times, says: 'You don't have to be good at selling or publishing, you can be trained in these skills or employ someone to do them for you. You need good people skills and the ability to talk to new people.'

■ Primary Times/Early Times 01491 845801; My Mag/Thebestof.com 0121 765 5555; Free2call 0870 755 5739.