



'I was frustrated when pregnant that I couldn't find any information relating to twins: nobody could give me any advice, and as a new mum expecting twins that's what you need. That put the seed in my head of creating twin kits for people who didn't have a clue what to buy.

Seeds of an idea

'When the girls were eight months old I employed a nanny part-time so that I could work on business plans. I researched the market potential and sent a Twin Kit survey to 300 twin clubs asking for feedback. I got about 300 replies, 80 per cent of which thought it was a great idea. Seventy-five per cent of the mums were online so I came up with the idea of an online twin shop and advice centre. I went to Business Link for advice and some training, and applied for funding. I used one of their recommended web designers and that's how I met our fantastic designer.

'Once the website was set up I started sourcing products – practical non-twin things like double breast pumps and maternity/changing accessories from the UK and twin-specific items like buggies, primarily from the US. I worked from home, so the house started filling with products! Once everything was in place I launched TwinsUK in September 2005 at a friend's twin shop in Tamworth. From there it's grown through word of mouth.

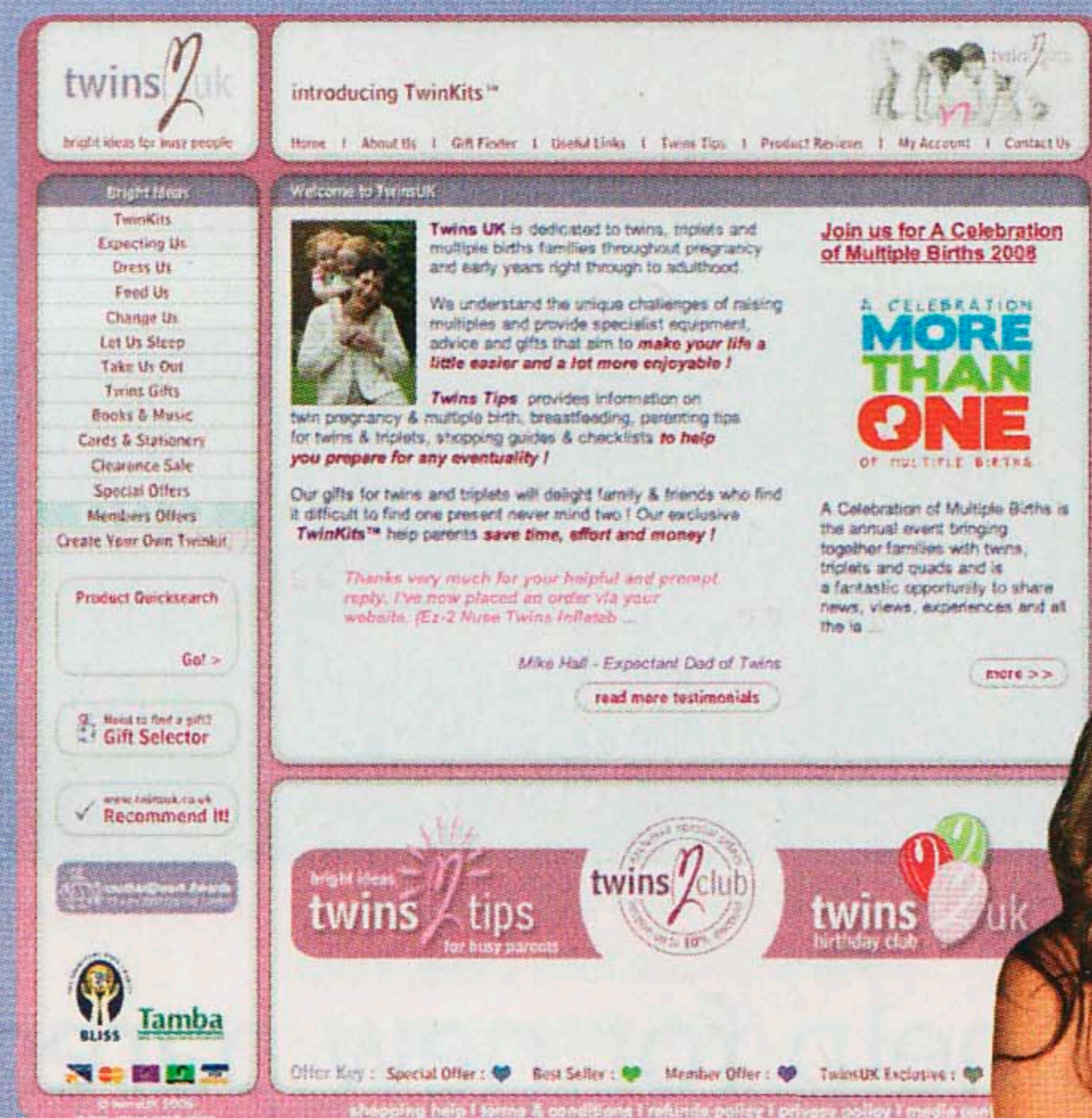
'After the launch, I stayed at work for 18 months, building up an income and waiting to see if it was worth giving up my career for. When I eventually left work in April 2007, I lost two-thirds of my income. Luckily I had enough savings to keep going for a year, before I could start taking a wage from the business.

'I took my first employee, Clare, on in March 2007. She does sales and marketing, and I now also have someone to do admin and sales. Clare's also a mum of twin girls – I wanted employees who would be sympathetic to our customers' situations.

'I lost two-thirds of my income when I resigned. Luckily I had enough savings'

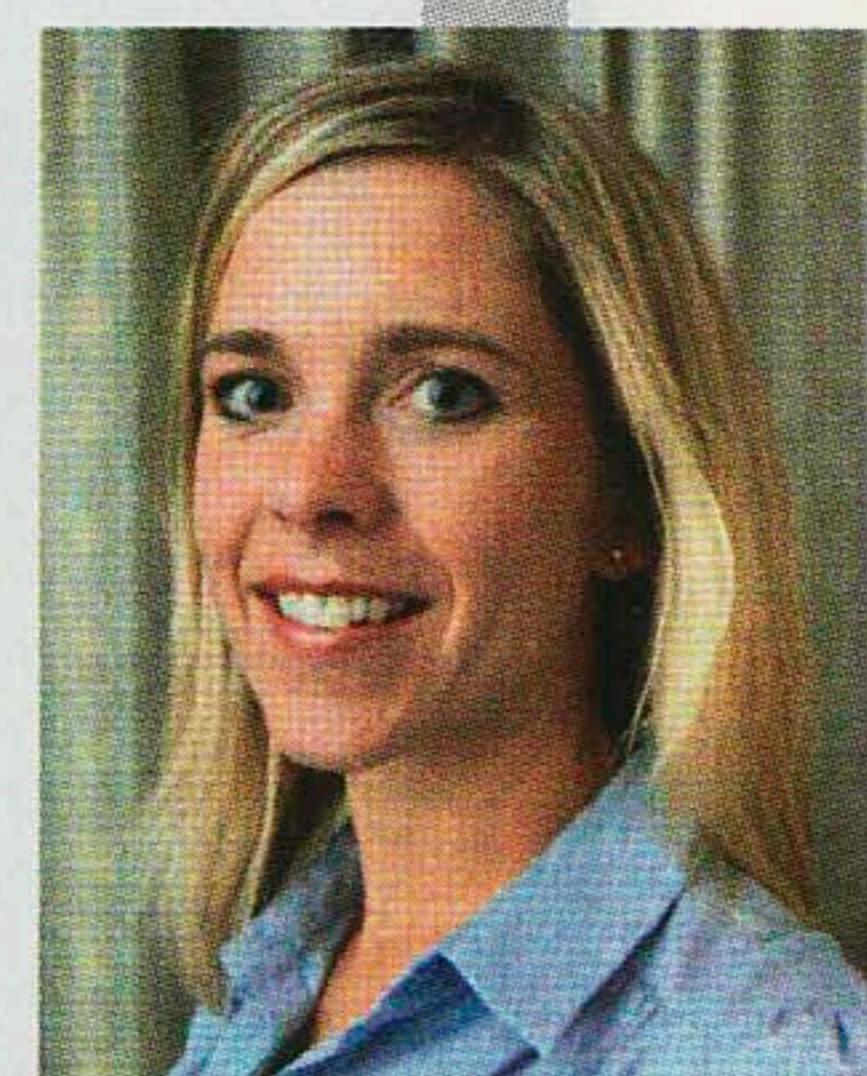
We've also moved into new premises so there's space for staff and storage.

'Everything's gone really well. People out there with twins really need help, and through TwinsUK I can help them. I work when the kids are in bed so I'm able to spend more time with them during the day; take them to nursery every day and go to concerts that they're in. It's all worth it when you see how pleased they are to see you supporting them.' ♥



Visit www.twinsuk.co.uk for more information, specialist equipment and unique gifts.

EXPERT Q&A



Gillian Nissim, founder of WorkingMums, answers your questions

Do new mums have any legal rights when it comes to flexible working?

'Parents of children younger than six have the right to request flexible working from their employer.

Eligible employees are able to request:

- a change to the hours they work
- a change to the times when they are required to work
- to work from home

The employer has a duty to consider the flexible working requests seriously, although they do not have to comply with the request. To qualify to request flexible working an employee must have worked for at least 26 continuous weeks with their employer.'

For further information, please visit www.WorkingMums.co.uk and www.HMRC.gov.uk

CELEBS SAY Myleene Klass

Model, musician and mum to Ava, 10 months, Myleene Klass manages the perfect work/life balance:

'I'm just like any normal working mum, only more people know about my work. Recently I walked around

Selfridges for half an hour with banana sick down my trousers. I hope

people can relate to me because I'm just a girl from

Norfolk who is trying to be the best she can be, which is, I have come to realise, distinctly average.'



DELYTH'S TOP TIPS FOR BUSINESS

- Research what you intend to do. Don't just rely on the opinions of friends and family – independent research is very important.
- Make an outline of your business plan and be realistic about what you can achieve, and make sure you're set up for a survival plan. There is no way I could have done it if I'd given up work straight away.
- Sort out childcare – don't think you can run a business successfully with small children running around.
- Read about success stories and see how they struggled at first. It's reassuring to know about them.