

Make a year's salary in three months

With a love of Christmas and the desire to start her own business, Sandra Byrne found her perfect opportunity with specialist festive design and installation franchise, The Christmas Decorators. **Tiffany Brooking reports**



INITIAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED FROM **£14,995 + VAT**

In 2008 Sandra Byrne moved from Ireland to Scotland with her young son to make a fresh start and pursue her ambition of running her own business. With an extensive background in retail and HR, Sandra was eager to find an opportunity that would utilise her skills and creative flair while also enabling her to fit work around her son.

"I looked at lots of different franchises from interior design to children's activity clubs but it was The Christmas Decorators that really appealed to me," she reveals. "I love Christmas and decorating my house, so when I discovered this business concept, I couldn't believe I would actually be able to make a living from such a fun job."

The Christmas Decorators specialises in the design and installation of interior and exterior festive lighting and decor for businesses and residential properties. Its franchise owners are also experts in creating perfect winter weddings and fabulous themed parties.

Sandra met with The Christmas Decorators founders, Nick and Sarah Bolton, at the company's head office in Liverpool to discuss the franchise opportunity further.

"I instantly felt comfortable with Nick and Sarah and their extensive industry knowledge and experience filled me with confidence," recalls Sandra. "I thought the business concept was brilliant and, with very little competition in the market, it

seemed like a great opportunity."

Before launching her Edinburgh-based franchise, Sandra attended a five-day comprehensive training course at head office, which covered all areas of the business from the actual decorating process itself to marketing and sales.

"The thought of starting my own business was very daunting," says Sandra, "but with the continued support of The Christmas Decorators team and my years of managerial experience, I felt confident about the launch of my business and couldn't wait to get started."

From September to January, Sandra enjoys a very busy schedule, designing and installing beautiful decor in hotels, retail outlets and residential homes, with the assistance of her very supportive family and team.

"When things get really busy, my mum, sister and brother-in-law are a huge help," says Sandra. "I also take on additional staff to help me deal with big jobs."

"Last year myself and a team of eight decorators fitted out two hotels, inside and out, which took us about three days. It can be hard work but it's great to step back and admire the final installations, see the clients' faces and hear them say 'wow' and 'thank you!'"

Once established, franchise owners can make a year's salary in three months by working hard for the 12 weeks around Christmas. However, they will need to put

in the marketing and sales effort during the year to generate new bookings.

"Throughout the rest of the year I call customers who have registered their interest and continue to promote The Christmas Decorators brand," explains Sandra. "Now in my third year of business, I have acquired a strong repeat customer base and hope to grow it further."

"This business is perfect for me," continues Sandra, "as a single parent, being able to work from home with flexible hours is a massive benefit. I have had some challenges juggling family and working around severe weather conditions and giving my house up for those busy months, to set up installations and do the prep work – it's well worth the effort though!"

"I really do love being a Christmas Decorators franchise owner. No two jobs are ever the same and the satisfaction of seeing the excitement on children's faces after we have decorated their home is a great feeling."

