



Snipping

the red tape

Laura Cartledge heads to Hayling Island for a lesson in boosting business.

In many ways, launching a business is now easier than ever.

However, whether it is a cake company or landscape gardening there's a lot more than logos and names to think about.

"We find people are breaking the law without knowing it," says Rob Briggs. "People think if they trade on eBay the rules exclude them and it doesn't, if you buy a lot of things with the intention of selling them you are in trade."

In fact the rules can be stricter in the digital world than in the real world.

"If you shop online and buy something you have a cooling off period, in 2014 this was extended to 14 days," Rob explains.

"But if you, as the retailer, don't tell them it becomes a year and 14 days - you have no

choice about it you have to give people their money back."

Far from bringing such topics to light in order to scare people off going it alone, Rob and wife Wendy have created Crimson Crab to help snip the red tape into shape.

"People want to concentrate on what they are good at, you don't go into business for the paperwork so let someone else do that," Wendy enthuses, explaining how their opportunity came about four years ago.

"My mum had Alzheimer's so I wanted to spend more time with her," she recalls, "and Robert had always wanted to set up a business."

The question of 'what?' wasn't difficult as Wendy has more than 17 years experience in local government, meaning she is no

stranger to project management or business support, while Rob has 35 years as a trading standards regulator.

"But we didn't want to be a trading consultancy because that is really boring," she insists.

"We do get asked a lot about the name. It just came to us, we live by the sea, shells are resilient, and crabs take different routes – if there are obstacles they find a way around it and that is what we do as a business."

The colour links with the red tape, which Rob says many people see 'as a barrier' causing them to procrastinate.

"Whereas we see it as opportunities to illustrate that the business is ethical and operating legally," he adds. "There are good ways of doing things and really awful ways."



The trick is knowing what to look out for and what needs to be done.

"We have a business MOT which will look at everything and give a report showing what is high risk, what is medium and people can either go away and fix it or we can help," Rob explains.

"There are 43 aspects and they will impact every business in some way, more than others.

"We have had a lot of experience in the area we are looking at and we want to share that with other people," he continues.

"We have people who are fantastic at what they do but might not be good at bookkeeping, for example."

The service also ranges from contracts and invoices to copyright and data protection - the latter of which has really come to the fore in recent years and can have serious consequences.

"There was a charity which went to a website designer and essentially said 'can you make me a website', the charity was involved in pregnancy advice, family planning," Rob reveals.

"There was a contact form on there which they, rightly, decided wasn't secure enough and had removed.

"But then there was some disagreement and the charity went to another server who saw there had been a contact form and reinstated it. Details were then stolen by a hacker who threatened to put 500 people's details on a pro-life site."

Rob recalls how legal proceedings then



Rob and Wendy Briggs

came into force and as the charity failed to show evidence of what it had instructed it was fined £375k.

"It is simply not good enough to rely on someone else to look after your legal responsibilities," he warns. "You have a duty of care.

"It can be quite daunting," Rob confesses, "there is quite a bit to start up a business and we want people not to be put off.

"It is a classic case of prevention is easier, and cheaper, than cure."

Knowing it can be difficult to 'find reliable, dependable help' for your business, Crimson Crab has introduced Reputation Advocates.

Not only have they been audited, and found to meet its standards, they have signed an agreement to comply with its code of conduct and ethical trading policy.

To find out more, visit crimsoncrab.net