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Life After The City: Celine David

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After losing her bank job during the ravages of the financial crisis, ex-Credit Suisse staffer Celine David is treading a new path as a landscape designer.



Celine David

Then: specialist saleswoman at Credit Suisse in London
Now: founder of eponymous creative garden landscaping company

"Designing gardens is my second career after the City, but it is by no means second-best, and losing my job at the end of 2008 was the push for me to set foot on a fresh path.

"I'd worked first as an analyst at UBS before moving to Credit Suisse, and by the time I lost my job during the financial crisis I'd just bought a flat that had a rather derelict garden.

"I've always enjoyed gardening and being outdoors, though this time the scope of the work needing to be done was far bigger. However, it showed me how much I love plants and optimising space in the garden.

"My old job wasn't bad, but to be honest, while I was making good money it wasn't very fulfilling, so after leaving Credit Suisse I decided to follow my heart, and used my savings to go for a garden design diploma. The course was hugely enjoyable but deciding whether or not this was a viable business proposition was stressful.

"My work now is rewarding in a different way from banking. The exotic holidays at the other end of the world are a thing of the past but, I no longer have to wake up at 5.27am to be in Canary Wharf by 6.30am. And the content of my work is now so fulfilling, I find it incredibly rewarding to see my ideas being implemented, and to see the clients so enthused about their new outdoor space. So yep, I guess I am poorer but I am also much happier.

"The hours in banking take their toll, even affecting your social life. Now my work is incredibly flexible, although meetings clients still fits around their work routines, as I meet them several times before the work actually begins. This is the first year the business has been running, and finding business has been easier than anticipated, even though things have slowed down in the last couple of weeks with the arrival of the cold weather.

"No matter how successful a design is, it counts for nothing without proper implementation. It was tricky establishing contacts with contractors, but now I have two reliable teams. I do the design and planting myself, as well as overseeing the

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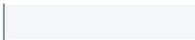
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implementation of projects, and as I play such a wide role in the value chain I have to be ruthlessly organised.



"One week I'll be mainly site-monitoring, the next I may be focusing on a design or planting, so there is huge variety in what I do, and also in the scope of the projects, which can vary between a rooftop redesign lasting a few weeks and 18-month landscaping projects.

"I don't really miss the City per se, where life was quite stressful, but like in any job there were lots of day-to-day chats with colleagues that I don't get to enjoy now."

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