

# The way to DIY success

by Linda Whitney

**T**HE Spring home improvement season is underway, which means more business for property maintenance and renovation franchises.

If you have building trades or DIY experience and want your own business, a property renovation franchise could be the solution.

You must be the practical type, but with a flair for management, and you must be willing to sell your service. Whatever your background, franchisors will train you.

Some franchises involve working from home while others mean opening a showroom. Whatever the franchise business model, be prepared for variety.

'We have fitted new worktops in boats, horseboxes, and one of the bars at Wembley stadium, as well as in domestic kitchens,' says Danny Hanlon of Granite Transformations.

Its franchisees use slim sheets of recycled glass, granite or quartz to re-top worktops, provide splash-backs, shower walls and floors. Business has increased by 38 per cent over the past year, as people revamp their kitchens rather than replace them.

You work from a retail showroom, and you will need sales and mar-



**DO-IT-YOURSELF** enthusiast Stuart Bain had renovated a few houses, so when he wanted to start his own business he chose the Aspray franchise, which involves running a property repair and restoration business. 'My former job as a manufacturing production manager gave me project management experience, but it also included responsibility for the company's buildings, so I was used to dealing with construction tradespeople,' says Stuart, 49, from Glasgow (pictured).

Aspray provides marketing and advertising help, some leads and appointments. Much of the work is a result of home insurance claims, so as well as managing restoration teams, franchisees liaise with insurers, loss adjusters and customers.

'I don't do the practical work myself, as I employ people to do it as required, but I carry out surveys, schedule the work and manage the projects and teams, as well as doing the business administration, so there's a wide variety of skills needed,' Stuart says.

Aspray is looking for more people with experience of project management, customer service skills and building knowledge. Investment is £28,000.

keting flair and management skills as most franchisees employ fitters, though you can do the fitting yourself. Initial outlay is from £30,000.

Most franchisors in this sector provide national advertising and marketing services, but they also expect you to do your own marketing.

'I've recently started a Facebook page and gone on Twitter and I've already got 20 followers and earned new business from both outlets,'

says George Stewart, 47, the Hamilton franchisee for Apollo Blinds.

Apollo franchisees offer all kinds of window dressings. Many run showrooms as well as supplying a fitting service, but the new Apollo at Home franchise means you can be home-based and work from a specially fitted-out van. The cost is from £15,900.

Canopies UK franchisees also work from home, selling and installing canopies in homes and

commercial premises. 'The range includes door canopies and car ports that can also be used to cover patio areas, because they are more robust than fabric awnings and filter out the sun's rays,' says Jason Eastwood of Canopies UK.

The company provides leads for franchisees to follow up, and you can install the canopies yourself or employ a fitter. You need no experience, as the £5,000 investment includes training. At the

other end of the scale the United Carpets, Wood Floor and Beds franchise involves opening a large out-of-town showroom.

You need no experience in the sector as the company provides training, but you will need a retail or sales background, and ideally experience of managing staff.

'We support you by handling all the paperwork such as payroll and VAT recording, so you are free to sell,' says Paul David of United Carpets.

The company is looking for more franchisees to expand in the midlands and in the north of England. Total investment is £99,000 but you can get started with £30,000 cash.

**S**ERVICEMASTER'S selection of five franchises includes Furniture Medic, a mobile service that means repairing and restoring wood, leather, UPVC, and upholstery, usually on site, for domestic and corporate customers.

Investment is £27,525 and includes training in the technical and business skills that are required.

ServiceMaster also offers a £25,650 franchise that involves running a disaster restoration service.

Franchisees provide specialists to clean up after fires and floods, and even at properties that have been scenes of drug taking, violence or murder.

■ Granite Transformations 01892 509 680, Apollo 0845 123 6030, Canopies UK 01254 777 002, United Carpets 07966 296 362, ServiceMaster 0116 275 9000, Aspray 0800 077 6704.