

# World of difference

*A businesswoman has discovered new clients around the globe, thanks to the Internet, writes Greg Thom*

**K**ATHIE Thomas works from home in suburban Cheltenham, but the world is her oyster.

As the founder of a secretarial support service, A Clayton's Secretary, she has clients around the globe.

Thanks to the power of the Internet, the former senior public servant's home-based business has more than doubled its turnover in six years. Not bad for someone who was once too afraid to dip her toes into the waters of the World Wide Web.

Thomas is part of a new breed of business entrepreneurs who are making the Internet work for them.

From designing their own Web pages to trading online, business people, particularly small operators, are increasingly getting into the cyber game.

Thomas, after working hard to establish and expand her home-grown enterprise, became frustrated at having to turn down clients because she could not handle them all.

"After two years I had more work than I could handle. I don't like turning work away because you never know when you might need it again," Thomas says.

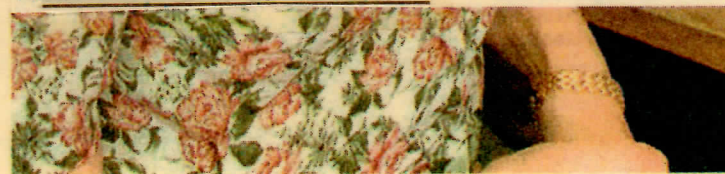
Then someone suggested she give the Internet a try as a way of managing her business.

"I had no knowledge of how it worked. I got on and just had a bit of a play, then off I went."

Within weeks of setting up her own Web site — the first to offer



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such as Argentina, India and the United States.

It was through the Internet that a now regular client, an American lawyer living in France, tracked Thomas down. He'd been unable to find the secretarial services he needed, so he reached out for help via the Web.

"Now he sends regular e-mails containing voice to be transcribed," Thomas says. "It's

the iceberg in what can be achieved," she says.

Looking back, Thomas says that within a year she knew she had made the right decision to start her own business.

"I had thought about it for some time. I had worked as a senior personal assistant and I'd helped people run businesses. I knew the skills involved. I also had five kids and I wanted to be at