

## THE BOSS

**NAME:**

Vicki Smith

**POSITION:**

Director,  
Absolute  
Aesthetics

**DRIVES:**

Mazda MX5

**LIVES:**

Milford, Surrey

**STATUS:**

Single

**FAVOURITE****MEAL:**

Anything Italian

**FAVOURITE****BOOK:**

"The Lovely  
Bones" by Alice  
Sebold

# Looking good

**"I was squeamish," said Vicki Smith, one of Britain's youngest medical directors, who is celebrating the second anniversary of her clinic, which offers aesthetic body treatments on Surrey Research Park in Guildford.**

She was remembering when she went for a job interview at the Royal Surrey County Hospital. "As I left, I realised it was in theatre," said Ms Smith who, since 2008, has seen the patient list double from 800 to 1,600 at Absolute Aesthetics, her company which concentrates on minimally invasive medical aesthetics. This includes everything from laser hair removal to lumps and bumps, breast enhancement and cellulite reduction.

"But I thought it must be on the outskirts rather than actually inside theatre. But it was." Once she started, though, Ms Smith realised it was not like "Casualty," the tv series. "There was very little drama, and I enjoyed it."

Before that, she had grown up in the Guildford area and went to George Abbot School where she stayed until the sixth form. After a placement at Marks and Spencer as a trainee manager, Ms Smith went to the University of Gloucestershire and did social care studies with the aim of going into social work. By the time she graduated, she had decided social work was not for her, and returned to Guildford and that interview at the Royal Surrey County Hospital to be a healthcare assistant in the operating theatre.

During her time at the hospital, Ms Smith teamed up with her current business partner, Mark Whiteley, and began working with him on a medical website company called Medical Pages. She worked there for three and a half years, but grew bored of sitting in front of a computer when she knew she wanted more hands on work with people.

When Mr Whiteley – a consultant surgeon and varicose vein specialist – and Medical Pages heard that Ms Smith was thinking of leaving, they said they would sponsor her through training if she brought her practice to Mr Whiteley's clinic. She agreed, and the result was Bella Vou Ltd, a health and beauty business which

was successful but eventually closed down. "I was in a medical facility but I was not maximising my opportunities," said Ms Smith. "And beauty was not my first choice. She did more training – including aesthetics – and Absolute Aesthetics, a separate company within The Whiteley Clinic, began. Two years later, its turnover is £250,000 and growing.

The company has five permanent staff as well as visiting consultants and practitioners: Mr Whiteley himself does some work with the company, and another person comes in to do semi permanent make up.

In the last 12 months, more business people have been visiting. "In the current climate, people are doing more to look good," said Ms Smith. "They are having to work longer and they need to look good because they feel threatened by younger people who may be after their job. So perhaps they want to look less tired, for example." Although Absolute Aesthetics began as the recession deepened, Ms Smith said the business had not been affected so far. "January is always a light month and the snow made them a bit more cautious, I think. But this month (March) people are continuing to spend money with us and we are going from strength to strength." The company does advertise and its website is being redeveloped to give a fresher look. Ms Smith – who is 29 – is in the Who's Who of Britain's youngest directors, she was in a recent edition of Good Housekeeping and was featured in SHE magazine, as well.

Prices depend on what a man or woman wants done, but they can range from £12.50 for electrolysis to £3,500 for laser liposuction. "I do not like to say a certain class of person can afford these treatments," said Ms Smith. "People will forego holidays and clothes to have them done."

Absolute Aesthetics is unlike its competition because it is based in a medical clinic and there are doctors and nurses on site. "A lot of them rent a room somewhere or are part of a larger hospital: we are a self running clinic."

Because the clinic uses local anaesthetic – for macrolane, which is breast augmentation, for example – it is regulated by the Care Quality Commission and licensed as an acute hospital. "It is very important for customers to know that if there is a problem, we can deal with it and manage it."

Ms Smith's ambition is to expand. "I want to set up clinics, where beauty meets medicine, all over the country."



## VICKI SMITH