



## Etta Cohen (Forward Ladies Ltd)

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Etta Cohen set up Forward Ladies in 2000 after a successful meeting with two female senior managers with a local bank.

They all agreed that the meeting had been useful and productive, and agreed to meet later in the year and bring along colleagues – and Forward Ladies was born!

Those initial three women have now grown into a significant membership with a database of more than 13,000 professional women. Although initially backed by Yorkshire Forward, the regional development agency, to encourage enterprise among women, it has grown into one of the fastest-growing business support organisations for women.

Forward Ladies now runs more than 300 events a year from training and development workshops, to a programme of inspirational speakers, business breaks, social and networking events. Forward Ladies has also taken trade missions to Hong Kong, Brussels and Latvia, and is organising a trip to Botswana later in the year, incorporating volunteering. They also offer mentoring and coaching for members. The website: [www.forwardladies.com](http://www.forwardladies.com) received around 95,000 unique visits each year, and is packed with events, useful business information and news about members.

After a career in teaching, Etta joined the former Training and Enterprise Council as education manager, working with blue chip companies. She then moved to Servicemark, establishing a new standard for customer service in Leeds, which went regional and then national. She later joined Yorkshire Forward as business relationship manager before creating Forward Ladies.

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The organisation became stand-alone in 2006, and the company has continued to grow across the north. Forward Ladies has expanded into the midlands and south of England, with further plans to launch in Scotland. Forward Ladies is also taking on licensees to run the company in towns and cities throughout the rest of the country.

“The network is very inclusive and open to all professional women, from any sector, any age and any stage in their career. Events are non-threatening, welcoming and supportive;” said Etta. “We are expanding because we believe that we have a positive contribution to make to support women in business – particularly in these challenging economic times. Women want support, business contacts and value for money, and that’s what we hope we give them.”