

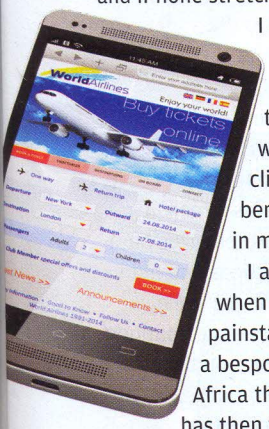
'Help, my wife is married to her job!'

Being married to a homeworker has its ups and downs, says *Andrew Don*, but a few concessions can ensure harmony reigns

I've been married to Liz, a senior travel adviser for Holidaysplease, for more than 20 years. Liz is married to her job.

Her most lucrative work tends to be out of hours. Many is the time I've had to give her dinner to the dog.

I'd understand if she went to bed with a cuddly toy – but her iPad and iPhone stretch my patience.



I am jealous when I hear about customers travelling in winter to exotic, hot climes while I shiver beneath the blankets in my thermals.

I absorb her stress when she curses about painstaking research for a bespoke trip to South Africa that the customer has then taken to other agents to undercut.

Liz doesn't have an off switch – in "sell" mode at every social occasion, she'll be handing out her business cards to next door's granny and the vicar.

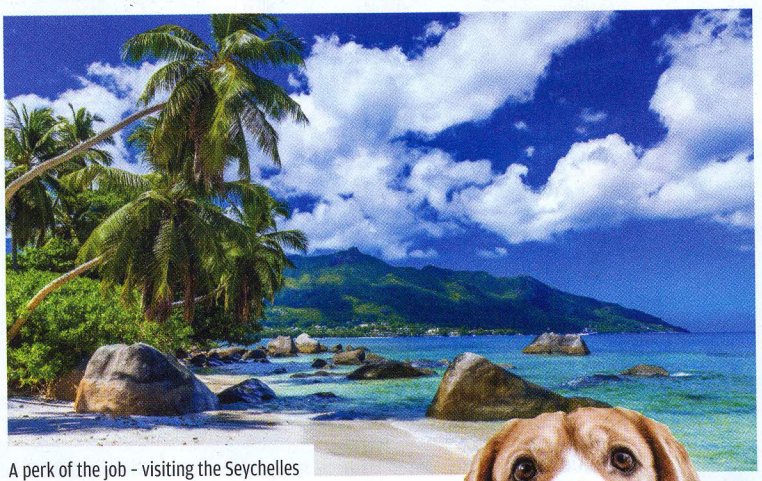
I'm Liz's unpaid adviser and help her with her breakfast club presentations. I thought up "Booking's a breeze with Holidaysplease". Director Richard Dixon doesn't think I should give up my day job.

Marriage to a homeworking travel agent has its positives, though. When I met Liz, I asked her for a date and she tried to sell me a holiday. I got a great deal. We were engaged six weeks later.

We continue to get good deals on holidays and we have been to the Seychelles many times thanks to Liz's trade contacts.



Andrew Don with wife Liz, who is employed as a homeworker for Holidaysplease



A perk of the job – visiting the Seychelles

I learn about all those little-known locations most people have not heard of, and write them down in my little black book of places to go before we die.

Small incidents can upset a holiday, but Liz knows how to sort things out – like one trip to the Seychelles when our brand-new luggage was left in the stopover location, Dubai.

I was apoplectic, but Liz knew exactly what to do and we got our cases back 12 hours later. One of them was damaged, but Liz's involvement in the industry ensured the ground handler quickly persuaded Emirates to buy a new case and deliver it to our Seychelles hotel.

Sorting out Liz's technological meltdowns – she used to think a virus scan was something that happened at our local surgery – has helped me to overcome my own technophobia.

I used to panic when my computers misbehaved, but because Liz's computer had nothing to do with my own business I was calm and methodical with hers. Learning to fix her technical problems helped me to resolve my own.

Holidaysplease is brilliantly supportive of its staff. They sometimes send chocolate as an incentive. The Dixons know that the way to motivate their homeworkers is to reward their partners.

There are inevitable economies of scale when we both work from home. Liz hogs my printer, I nick her stamps.

Then there's the room service. "Put the kettle on, honey," I shout from my adjacent home office. "Let the dog out – she's desperate."

I am happy to know Liz works for a business that does the "right thing" by its homeworkers. This in turn makes me supportive of Liz and able to overlook her unhealthy relationship with her iPad – although I took some convincing that Siri was not her bit on the side.

My advice to other travel agents' partners is:

- Develop a taste for burnt food
- Be prepared for friends and relatives to run for cover at social events
- Show a willingness to be an unpaid adviser, sounding board and punch bag
- Develop a finely tuned sense of humour because if you don't laugh, you'll cry.

