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A peek in the life of... A florist who turned a failing business into one relied on by royalty

By [Marianne Power](#)

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Flower power: Kally Ellis provides displays for royalty, celebrities and top hotels

Kally Ellis runs McQueens florists and lives in North London, with her husband Damien, a children's author, and two children Sophie, 17, and Freddy, 15. Kally says:

When I decided to quit my job in the City to open a flower shop in the middle of the last recession, everyone thought I was mad.

I'd had a dream about it and three months later it was a reality. Despite knowing nothing about flowers, I took voluntary redundancy and plunged all my money into a failing florist's in East London - called McQueens.

Now, 19 years later, after countless 2am starts and 18-hour days, I have to pinch myself when I get calls from Japan and Hollywood.

We have almost 30 staff and six vans driving around London delivering bouquets to five-star hotels such as The Berkeley and The Connaught and businesses such as Louis Vuitton and Mulberry.

We supply flowers to celebrities and royalty, including Gwyneth Paltrow and Nicole Kidman.

Our big break came a couple of years after we opened when, out of the blue, I got a call from Vanity Fair magazine.

They had come to London to host a big A list event and the florist had let them down.

A friend of a friend had mentioned my name, and they asked if I could do it. I said 'yes', then panicked.

They wanted huge 20ft topiaries and extravagant displays - it was in another league to anything we had done, but somehow we managed.

That was the party where Princess Diana wore that amazing black dress, just after Charles had admitted to having an affair with Camilla. It was also the party that made our name.

After that, some of the big hotels got in touch and Vanity Fair insisted on using us for all their events around the world, including their exclusive Oscar parties in LA.

For 13 years we've flown out a team of ten to arrange the thousands of roses sent over especially from Holland, and we get to go to the party, too, which is the most amazing fun.

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A great story - someone going out and being productive and creative, and providing people with a service they want. What a difference from the armies of useless public-sector non-job leeches out there!

- Kay, England, 02/4/2010 11:08

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Well done to her! Turning a dream into reality by a lot of hard work rather than just the more common wishful thinking. Very impressive!

- Anthony, (No longer in) Sheffield, 01/4/2010 09:11

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