

what's a girl to do when Starting a business online?

by Pamela Baumeister

At 3 a.m., high-pitched screams force her out of bed. By 7 a.m., customers' orders await filling and two tiny mouths anticipate breakfast. If it's a good day, at 10 a.m. she might get herself, her baby and her toddler out the door to the gym for a quick workout. Then, it's back to carefully packaging orders while the kids nap (if she's lucky) or play on the floor. Make dinner. Tidy up messes. Get kids to bed; check orders and e-mails again before crashing herself. This is the life of an online retail mom-trepreneur.



New mom-trepreneur

Summer Adams, the owner of Web-based boutique ATresChicBoutique.com, started her business a few months ago and now keeps this hectic schedule. It took a year of thinking about starting an online business, a few months of research, then finding vendors, requesting wholesale, setting up a Web site and bada-boom-bada-bing — she was an online boutique owner.

Summer's husband, Josh, is supportive and encouraging. She says, "He even drives our SUV with the boutique Web site on it," all over town to help her advertise. He'll also fill orders when necessary.

Family time is very important to the couple, since they have been through four pregnancies to bring two children into the world. Time with 2-year-old Brooklyn and 4-month-old Beckham is dearly treasured.

"My kids are only in childcare when I go to the gym," says Summer proudly. But, working and being mommy at home is tough. Most work is done when her cherubs are napping.

Children grow up quickly. Inevitably, so will Summer's business. How will she handle the growing business as her tots become more active?

First steps

"Ask yourself these questions: First, what are your personal, professional and financial goals? And, second, which goals are non-negotiable?" advises Rudy Ortiz, a business consultant for Strategic Business Solutions. You need to know the answers to these questions before starting a business. "[Your] business is a tool to help you fulfill your goals," he continues.

As you determine your goals, you'll be better able to make decisions for the business. Any business owner will tell you that you'll make mistakes; however, if you don't know what your own goals are first, "You'll screw up," says Ortiz.

Next, determine who your clients will be. "The best way to figure this out is to determine who you want to go after and then find out what they want," says Ortiz. Your business decisions are based on your clients.

With your goals in place and your client clearly defined, you'll need to build systems for your business. How will the business function without you there? What processes will your employees need to follow to guarantee the same quality of service or the same high standard of products to the customer?

Ortiz compares developing systems to building a structure. If you don't have systems in place, you'll waste time, money and energy. "It's like ordering brick and cement and then deciding what kind of building to make," he says.

Raising a business

While raising her young children is Summer's first priority, she's also creating systems for her business to handle its own growth.

"I've got every procedure written down in the order that we do them from receiving to shipping. I've found good people that are available part-time if I need them and I know they will care for my customers and my business as I do," says Summer. This is because she knows what her goals are, which of them are non-negotiable, who her clients are and how to use systems to generate success.

"My family comes first, but in my business my customers come first. The people helping me with my business allow me to give my family and home the attention they need so that [my] life doesn't get out of whack." **ww**

getting started

Prior to beginning your business, be sure to seriously address the following:

- What are my personal, professional and financial goals? Which of these goals are non-negotiable.
- How will this business assist me in reaching these personal, professional and financial goals?
- Every business decision needs to revolve around asking, "Who is my client?"
- Build systems based on the work you've already done in determining the focus of your business.

try this

Other good books by Michael Gerber to read on this subject:

- *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It* \$16.95 (Paperback), 286 pages
Publisher: HarperCollins, 1995
ISBN: 9780887307287
- *E-Myth Mastery: The Seven Essential Disciplines for Building a World Class Company* \$16.95 (Paperback), 484 pages
Publisher: HarperCollins, 2007
ISBN: 9780060723231