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For her information



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FHI: What's the biggest challenge running your own business?

FFW: In corporate America you always have someone else to ask questions of and to answer to but when you own your business, unless you have a partner—which I don't—you only have yourself to ask and to answer to. The challenge is trying to make sure that the decisions you make are the best for the business. It's sometimes difficult to play devil's advocate with yourself. I have a couple of confidants that I can go to with these sorts of questions and ideas and know that they have my business' best interest at heart.

FHI: What do you love best about your business?

FFW: I LOVE having no one else to answer to and being my own boss. This way if I fail somewhere I have a lesson to learn and only myself to blame. However, I feel that success is always to be shared with others who have helped you along the way.

FHI: Who is your professional mentor/role model?

FFW: I can't say that I have one particular professional role model. There are many women who have started their businesses and have been very successful and I just hope to be among them.

FHI: What advice do you have for women considering starting their own business?

FFW: My advice is to talk to as many people as you can and learn as much as possible before venturing out. There are many women who have started their own businesses and are more than willing to help with sorting through ideas and to answer questions.



Deborah Cole

Deborah Cole, founder of D.G. Cole Law, a firm focusing on commercial, employment and environmental litigation, is the motivated MOMpreneur of a fourteen-year-old daughter. After spending nineteen years working in prominent Chicago law firms, Cole realized the difficulty of combining family and sixty-hour work-weeks. As a result, she started her own business, which affords her more flexibility and balance in her life.

For Her Information: How did you start your business?

Deborah Cole: I am an attorney, so the logistics of starting my own business were easy for me. I incorporated my law practice, hired a good woman accountant and contacted all of my clients personally and sent them an announcement. Upon leaving a large Chicago law firm, I had the good fortune of having all of my clients follow me to my new firm.

FHI: What's the biggest challenge running your own business?

DC: The biggest challenge of owning your own business is knowing when to say "no." For example, last year in addition to running my own law practice and having a family, I was the president of the board of a neighborhood organization and I was a member of three other philanthropic boards as well as the head of a foundation that I began for ovarian cancer awareness. The challenge is time management.

FHI: What do you love best about your business?

DC: The best part about my business is being my own boss. When I started my career as a young lawyer, my first boss told me that I would do well but that I had to learn to "conform." I never wanted to conform and now, I don't need to worry about it. I have the flexibility to "partner" with my clients in finding creative solutions to their legal problems.

FHI: Who is your professional mentor/role model?

DC: Susan Getzendanner, the first woman judge in the Northern District of Illinois.

FHI: What advice do you have for women considering starting their own business?

DC: Plan carefully but don't be afraid to take a few risks. The "safe" option is not always the best one for a woman who is trying to manage career, family and her own life.

Jennifer Oppenheimer

Jennifer Oppenheimer, new mom to fifteen-month-old Charlie, turned her love for dress-ups into success when she started *The Closet* in 2002. As a wardrobe stylist, Oppenheimer uses her "in the closet" skills to, as Chicago's Daily Candy put it, "tame the unruliest garment garage without a hint of Carson Kressley 'tude.'" Oppenheimer also helps to sell clothes in consignment stores, as well as to outfit clients with the perfect individual style that they are looking for.

For Her Information: How did you start your business?

Jennifer Oppenheimer: Clothing has always been more of a hobby for me than a necessity. Growing up I always loved playing dress up [of course, what girl didn't?]. I spent a lot of (cont'd)



Photos courtesy of our MOMpreneurs: (opposite page, from top) Gwen and Healthy Handfuls, Felicia and Janey Quay, (this page) Deborah and daughter Kia, Jennifer and Charlie.

in my mom's closet helping her get dressed. I had an eye for colors, fabrics and fits that would flatter her most. Since then I always had a knack for putting it all together. Professionally, I worked for two different public relations firms, Fleishman-Hillard and Hill and Knowlton. In September 2002 I decided to use my professional background along with my passion for clothes to start my own business, *In the Closet*.

FHI: What's the biggest challenge running your own business?

JO: Time management.

FHI: What do you love best about your business?

JO: The flexibility with scheduling my clients so I can maintain balance in being a mom, and seeing how much my clients enjoy and appreciate the services I provide.

FHI: Who is your professional mentor/role model?

JO: My role model would be Rachel Zoe because she has fun with her clients the way I hope my clients have fun working with me.

FHI: What advice do you have for women considering starting their own business?

JO: Make sure that you love what you do. If you enjoy yourself it makes working worthwhile, especially if you are taking time away from your family to accomplish your goals.



Jitka Yost

Like Oppenheimer, Jitka Yost is also a new mom—to seven-month old Ellie. Yost, a Czech native, started her own massage therapy business in 2005. Although she converted her attic into a massage studio, she still makes house calls. This allows her to work with clients at times that are convenient for them. Yost helps her clients to experience a pain-free and stress-free living.

For Her Information: How did you start your business?

Jitka Yost: Doing massage therapy was always my dream, even while growing up in the Czech Republic. I spent a few years working as a concierge in the Renaissance and Intercontinental hotel in Prague. After unexpectedly moving across half the world, I entered The Chicago School of Massage Therapy, and following graduation, I was

employed part time at the Four Seasons Spa, while also seeing private clients. After the birth of my daughter Ellie, I knew that in order to enjoy her baby years I would want to be the boss of my own time as much as possible. So I decided to focus mainly on private clientele.

FHI: What's the biggest challenge running your own business?

JY: The irregularity of the schedule. One week I might be getting lots of calls and I have to make many decisions regarding what part of the day with my daughter I want to give up. Yet another week might be very slow and my hands are "itching" to sink into a muscle and make someone feel different and better.

FHI: What do you love best about your business?

JY: It is very portable. All I need to do my job are my hands and a person that needs a massage. It has a great future. As long as there will be people on the planet, I will never be out of business. It is very relaxing. In order to give a great quality massage to a client, I calm and relax myself.

FHI: Who is your professional mentor/role model?

JY: Some of my teachers from massage school are my role models: Bob King, Frances Salvato, Gail Willert. Anyone that gives me a great massage is my mentor. They teach me through their touch.

FHI: What advice do you have for women considering starting their own business?

JY: Start a business doing something you have always wanted to do. You already have a great head start by being passionate about it. When people see that you love what you do, they will take you seriously and know you strive to be an expert in your field. Start alongside of your regular job if you can so then you won't be stressing about making it financially right away.

Jhi

Photos courtesy of our MOMpreneurs: (this page) Jitka and Ellie.