

A real live wire

VALERIE HOLSTEIN HAS CREATED ONE OF THE WORLD'S PREMIER CABLE MANAGEMENT BUSINESSES WITH A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR ANNUAL REVENUE

Five years ago Valerie Holstein was just another expectant mother with a problem to solve. She had become increasingly worried by the unsightly and unsafe glut of cables from the family's electronic devices. After an exhaustive search for products to help manage the wiring taking over her home, she was certain that other people shared her frustration over the lack of solutions to this common problem.

With that epiphany and just \$30 – along with a desire to start a home-based business that would allow her to earn an income – out of her garage CableOrganizer.com was born. After just five years in business, Valerie's business is tracking to log a 2007 sales revenue of \$10 million.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST BIG BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY?

I'm not sure if Boeing realises this or not, but we received a bit of a Christmas miracle when they placed their first order with us on Christmas Day 2002. That Boeing order served as a wake-up call, and truly helped us to realise the potential of CableOrganizer.com.

WHAT'S THE SECRET OF YOUR SUCCESS?

I really don't consider it to be a secret ingredient, but at CableOrganizer.com we live and do business according to the 'Golden Rule': treating others just as we would want them to treat us. Our business formula is centred on customer focus, elbow grease and, above all, commitment. In respect to commitment, running a business is like marriage – unless you're committed to it, it's just not going to work.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BEST MOMENT IN BUSINESS?

Being recognised by our peers and customers when we were presented with a 2006 Stevie Award was definitely a standout business moment for us. It was an incredible honour to be selected from a group of such stellar and accomplished competitors, and getting to accept that award made me feel like all our hard work had finally paid off.

AND YOUR WORST?

We encountered a rough spot in April 2006 when we reached the point of being literally one week away from having to close down CableOrganizer France. It was a scary position to be in, and luckily we were able to recover just in time. But had we actually lost that division of our business, it would have been a big personal failure.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE WORK AND FAMILY LIFE?

Owning and operating a business can very easily take a toll on your personal life. The bottom line is that there will always be work that needs to be taken care of, but you can't let that fact ruin your relationships with the people you love.

Make it a priority to spend time with your family. Do whatever it takes, even if you need to pull out your daily planner or PDA and make an appointment. I've found that it's much easier to maintain balance in life if I schedule personal and family activities just as if they were work related.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

Since we place a lot of value on continuous improvement, building a great business that takes care of its customers and employees is a goal that constantly motivates us. Proving to ourselves that anything is possible if we set our minds to it has also been a driving factor.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY?

I think that every business out there can answer this question a little differently. For us, new customer opportunities and good relationships with our vendors are very important. The best partnerships you can form are with people and companies who have the same business philosophies as you do.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON LEARNED IN YOUR BUSINESS CAREER?

I can sum that up with a phrase we like to use at CableOrganizer.com – the customer is king. Without our customers, we wouldn't be here.

WHAT'S YOUR BEST PIECE OF ADVICE FOR A BUDDING ENTREPRENEUR?

Make sure before you start that you're in the right place to take advantage of opportunities that come along, and be prepared to invest a lot of time and hard work into your business.

Evaluate your motives, strengths and weaknesses ahead of time. Keep in mind that if you can't handle pressure, customer focus and working extra hard, you'd probably be better off not starting your own business. **MM**

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