

10 Things A Mumpreneur Should Know!

It is over ten years since I started dabbling with my business idea. And yet I think I have only just learnt the 10th thing that a mumpreneur should know. Let me save you some time.

In the beginning... we had just returned to the UK. I was heavily pregnant, our 15-monther was into everything and my job-seeking hubbie was like a bear with a sore head. Finally I despatched him to the garden shed to work out how to make a modern version of an old Victorian puzzle we had often discussed. Momentum really picked up when the boys started primary school. Today we manufacture, distribute and export several quirky, fun, educational products. Our ranges address the concerns and challenges facing parents who want the best for their children (see our products at www.zoobookoo.com).

In my experience, there are ten things a mumpreneur should know to significantly improve her chance of success. These are in addition to all the good business practices of defining a genuine customer need, finding a great product or service and supplying it at the right price, profitably and with excellent customer service. These 10 things are the 'soft' but equally important elements (and you will still need a little luck!):

1. ***Belief & Commitment!*** You must totally believe in your idea. If you doubt it, how can you sell it? Review the concept from

many viewpoints and believe in your heart that it really is a great solution and that you can make it work. There is no quick business fix. It takes time to build a business – this is long-haul so you have to be able to live with it and you need to be good at it!

2. ***Focus & Vision!*** You need a clear purpose for your business and then you must stay focussed on delivery. Your resources are limited, don't get side-tracked, remain true to the core business concept (unless you have to change your focus for commercial reasons – then you have a new focus). However, you need to be looking forward, generating new ideas – how can we? Put aside time for this once a quarter. No idea is silly – consider everything – but it must tick all the boxes for your business focus.
3. ***Research!*** Talk about everything – big and small - with lots of people (ensure confidentiality). Test your concept. Will they buy it? How does it compare to the competition? Nothing is impossible. Deliberately think of doing things in other ways. People working with or around you will have great ideas that could save you money, take your idea to a new level or solve a challenging production problem. Brainstorm. Listen. Be exhaustive (a wee glass of wine can help here!)
4. ***Priorities & Organisation!*** Plans work. Make a plan, refine it, change it but work with the plan. Assign deadlines and responsibilities in writing (particularly if it is for you!). File everything so you can lay your hands on it immediately. Plan

your time, your whole day. Have a detailed contacts list. Run a to-do book – everything goes in the book. Review it at the start of every morning. Then in the evening plan what you are going to do tomorrow. This is a military operation! And your memory is not what it used to be!

5. **Weaknesses!** We all have them, and we can all justify them: I rush in (the excitement of it all bowls me over); I am nervous about spending serious money (that's the Scot in me!); I am not good at delegating (that's me the multi-tasker!); I can't sit still for two minutes (just like my Dad) - identify and deal with your weaknesses. Write them down and ideas to re-train yourself to behave differently. Try not to get annoyed when someone says, 'You're doing it again!'
6. **Grit & Determination!** It is tough out there, whatever you are doing. Your belief and organisational skills will give you confidence. But you have to be brave. Put yourself on the front-line. Deal with customers, prove your concept to be true. Deal with concerns. Mistakes will be made (I have many to my credit!) and you will be gutted. But you have to pick yourself up, plan how to deal with it and get it right next time. In my first job I was taught very quickly the difference between an excuse and a reason! A reason is when you tackle something head-on and provide an explanation and ideally a solution; an excuse means you are incompetent! Reasons reap rewards in all areas of the business.

7. **People!** Build good relationships with everyone (staff / suppliers / customers / postman / courier drivers...). Spend more time concentrating on the very important relationships. Listen. Try not to rush calls and conversations. If you have been let down or are facing a difficult situation, cool off over night before firing off that email or making that call. Forge long-term and healthy relationships. This is a great investment of time.
8. **Mentor!** We all need one and I think mumpreneurs should have several. I am hugely lucky to have my husband. He has taught me so much. Ideally try to find support from someone who understands running a business; then perhaps someone else to bounce ideas off; and a friend to chat with when you're down or overwhelmed. A different perspective can be inspirational.
9. **Stress-Busting!** This is a toughie. Mumpreneurs tend to be wee whirlwinds, always on the go. Your business tends to consume you. You are the business, the business is you. You are quite naturally consumed by your family too. That doesn't leave much of you! It is easy to become isolated. I have been on courses and read books because I know I am not good in this area. I now run three times a week (slowly!). My husband and I try to get out regularly. Some friends suggested a book club... but there is still a long way to go.
10. **Publicity!** Recently it was brought to my attention, that I have never really pushed the business forward by putting myself about and getting noticed – bit of a shrinking violet. I had never

really thought about it like that before. Then I realised that (luckily) my business has been pulled through and grown by our lovely customers, and that I have to get more pro-active. This is an area for improvement for me and this article is the first step.

Life is short and there is so much to do. My husband and boys keep saying I work too hard – but I'm having fun – though I have to work on the balance. I think I may have one of the best jobs in the world. I am not a millionaire, but in the team we create and deliver what people need and enjoy. Job satisfaction is huge. I could not imagine doing anything else (but perhaps we should brainstorm that over a bottle of white)!

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