

Ask SCORE for Business Advice

**“Ask SCORE” Column
Green Bay Press Gazette: October 28, 2010**

Hobby can be turned into a business by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Nancy Hettmann, a lifelong resident of the Green Bay area, likes the term "hobby business." That's because she believes that best way to have a successful start-up is to do something you love. She's done it once, and she's in the process of doing it a second time.

Hettmann was employed full time in marketing when Mike Stone, a Green Bay SCORE counselor, talked to her about the possibility of doing some work on the side. Stone, an accomplished business owner, needed assistance in moving some product, and Hettmann was enthusiastic. The relationship was mutually beneficial. Hettmann found buyers, and Stone provided mentoring.

"My mentor helped me by giving me a part-time position, and then I worked on my own to increase the company base that I was working with," Hettmann said. "As my new business developed, Mike gave me good advice and helped support me with the encouragement needed to build my confidence and grow."

Before long, Hettmann started Essential Sales, an independent marketing company. The business does marketing for companies by focusing on increasing their market base. As she grew the business, she figured out the amount of business she would need to go solo and was able to go full time within a few months. Now, she's building on that success and starting another hobby business.

"My mother was a wonderful seamstress, and she made me everything from slips to prom dresses," she said. "I had two years of home economics in high school, and then sewed quilts for my five children. When the kids left home, I had no intention of ever sewing again."

However, after her mother died, she decided to give sewing another try and felt like it was in her blood. Considering it a legacy, Hettmann discovered that she loved to create with cloth and thread. Her husband bought her a sewing machine she could "grow into" and before long she was making totes, purses, eyeglass cases, iPad pouches, and other products.

"I felt like I could not stop the train from rolling down the track and launching me into helping consumers find the perfect tote or iPad cover to help their busy lifestyle," Hettmann said.

She now works seven days a week. During the day on Monday through Friday, she makes marketing calls. On nights and weekends, she sews. She has started selling at art and craft fairs and in retail stores. She also teaches part time at the YMCA.

When Hettmann discusses her busy schedule, she says that its fun to grow her hobby business along with her now-full-time business. She sees a future of growth and would like to be able to add employees. As she thinks about her experiences, Hettmann encourages others to look at their skills and talents and consider starting a business of their own.

"See where your strengths lay, read about increasing your stamina and improving your confidence and product or service, and get started now!"

Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of DB Commercial Real Estate in Green Bay and assistant district director for SCORE, Wisconsin.