

**“Ask SCORE” Column  
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**‘Hobby business’ offers fun, flexibility by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt**

"I'm a people person," she said. "I love people and am always curious about their lives and interests."

It naturally followed that she was good at communication and networking. And, those skills also made her a natural in sales.

Sternhagen actually stumbled upon her current career. While working as an office manager, she decided to sign up as a Mary Kay Cosmetics representative so that she could buy at a discount.

"It was kind of a fluke," Sternhagen said. "I wasn't really looking for anything else, but when a friend asked if I sold Mary Kay and I went to her home and made \$45 in 45 minutes, I decided to look into it a little more."

Within a few years, Sternhagen was driving her new Mary Kay vehicle and had replaced the income from her corporate job. She left the corporate world, and her hobby became her full-time job.

"A hobby business is a job that you do to make a little extra income, but you enjoy it. That's how I started, and now I make an executive income working part time and choosing my hours and driving a new car every two years," she said.

Sternhagen recommends that people considering a hobby business clearly assess their financial condition before quitting a full-time job. Even if a person is at the point where he or she can handle it financially, she says it's a good idea to give it a full year and make sure that it's something one really wants to do. Since she's in sales, Sternhagen acknowledges that some people can't handle the rejections. The ideal hobby business will capitalize on a person's skills and personality.

Mary Kay is unique in that the business is well defined and individual representatives don't need to write a business plan. The corporate business plan calls for goal-setting with yearly, monthly, weekly and daily goals. Sternhagen advises other entrepreneurs to follow this example and to be prepared for a number of roles.

"I am the president, treasurer and consultant," Sternhagen said. "I network and make phone calls to assist my unit and to book parties. I follow up and service customers. I am a teacher, trainer and mentor, along with being a consultant."

Sternhagen emphasizes that she is having fun and loves the flexibility.

"At Mary Kay, we set our own hours by putting our faith first, family second and career third. The best thing is being able to set my own hours. I can take off a week to spend with my grandkids and work when I want to work."

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

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