

Title:

The Fine Art of Juggling Business and Motherhood for Mom Entrepreneurs

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Summary:

It is not easy to juggle business and motherhood but here's a story of how one mom managed to do both.

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Article Body:

Like every entrepreneurial mom, two of the top priorities in my life are my family and my business.

My Story. I have always been a driven person. I knew what I needed to do to earn my next promotion. I took every class and seminar that I could find to help me get ahead. When I was in my early 20's, all my colleagues were men in their 40's. If I had kept going, I would certainly have reached upper level management.

My desire and drive for status in the corporate world came to a screeching halt on a day in late 1993--the day I became Jackie's Mom. That day, as all Moms understand, my priorities dramatically shifted. Life was no longer "all about me". I wanted to spend as much time with her as I could. Suddenly work and school were unimportant. I began looking for opportunities to work from home or for good part-time jobs.

It is not easy to juggle business and motherhood. I do not claim to be an expert. After Jackie was born, I spent several years in the corporate world not realizing there were other opportunities for me. While I worked full-time, my constant concern was that I was missing everything while my child was in daycare for 11 hours a day. Because I know children are only little "for a short time", a cloud of overwhelming sadness was constantly hanging over me. In my efforts to overcome this concern, I was fortunate along the way to find several excellent part-time jobs, and I even job-shared for a year. I have actually only worked full-time for half of my daughter's 12 years. Yet it still never occurred to me that I could leave the security of a corporate job to have my own

business.

Thankfully, the entrepreneurial bug bit me in late 2002. I now have my own business, and I love every minute of it. I am much happier and I am able to set my schedule around my children's important activities and, on occasion work with them beside me. I recently sat at breakfast with Jackie and asked her when she has been happiest with my work schedule. She too was happiest when I was able to take her to school and pick her up myself and attend all her important activities.

My husband, Terry is about to begin working in my business full-time, too. While we are looking forward to being together more and working together to help build our business, this will be a major life change for us. Our son Cole (age three) is currently in daycare for three part-time days each week. Last week we discussed some of the adjustments we will need to make with Terry being home more. We made the commitment to juggle taking care of Cole and working in the business the remaining two days a week for the next two years until he starts kindergarten. We know it is best for Cole, that this time is a special time to be with him, and he is worth it.

I have learned many things as a Mom Entrepreneur, and I would like to share two of them. The Importance of Being Present. Several months ago, I had a breakfast meeting with my business partner and one of our networking organization members. The member was sharing some of the things he had learned in a workshop. I will never forget when he said, "You are not listening, you've never listened, and you are not listening now..." Then he explained how he realized he hadn't been listening to his own daughter. I immediately understood what he was saying and my heart sank. I thought of my children. Although I had always wanted to have as much time with them as possible, I had become involved in growing my business. While juggling both work and family, I had stopped listening. I had been fooling myself and I had been very wrong. I apologized to my daughter that day. I changed immediately, including even little things. For example, while ironing on stars Jackie had earned in P.E., I took the time to talk about how she had earned the stars. I understood how much I was going to miss unless I was present all the time. Working moms often struggle with the lack of time spent with their children, but when we are present, every moment we spend with our children can be special quality time.

The Value of Teamwork. One of the most important things we can do for our families is to have open communication. I am not afraid to ask for help from my family. I try my best to communicate my upcoming schedule ahead of time. When I have a particularly hectic week, we talk about what is happening, if it's temporary, acknowledge the stress it puts on all of us and handle it together.

As a team, we worked out a plan for the days when I leave early to attend a breakfast meeting. When I say, "I have a breakfast meeting tomorrow," everyone knows what to do. For example, my husband takes care of our son and drops him off at preschool. My family understands my commitment to them is, if at all possible, I will only attend one breakfast meeting a week. I communicate with them what is happening in the business and try to involve them in it, too. We are all in this together. As the business succeeds, we all succeed.

You can help, too. I love to help others, and as I continue my personal journey towards a more balanced life, I want to collect the experiences of other entrepreneurial moms. I am also writing a book for Mom Entrepreneurs. The comments submitted for these articles could also be featured in the book. It is my goal to share your stories so that we can all help each other to master the fine art of juggling business and motherhood.