

7. BE YOUR OWN BOSS

READING

This article discusses women who work in their own businesses that they have created.

Before you read, think about:

- whether you have ever wanted to start your own business.
- what kind of a business you would be good at running.
- whether you have any good ideas for new products that moms would like but can't find in the stores.

What do women want from their working life? We know that women want different things from work than men do. Women care a lot about being fairly paid, but it is things like the meaning and purpose of the work, giving back to the community, having great co-workers, finding friendship at work that are more important than having the biggest **salary**. And that opens up opportunities to find satisfying work.

Women are being told these days that it is possible to have meaningful work and a happy family, raise well-adjusted children, and have a good marriage. However, it certainly seems difficult to believe by the end of a busy day at work when facing making dinner, kids, homework, housework and a husband.

Many women in Canada have figured out what works for them and that is to be an **entrepreneur** and start their own business. Small business is important for Canada's economy and women are at **the leading edge** of the small business **bonanza**. The number of women who have decided to **take the plunge** and begin a business **venture** has jumped considerably in the last 20 years. Almost half of the new businesses begun in the past decade are **start-ups** led by women.

Women bring creativity, hard-work (which they are used to as busy moms), experience, skills and a great desire to succeed as an entrepreneur. The **majority** are married, most have children. Many start

businesses in the personal, household, and service areas but women with skills and talent are in every type of business – large and small.

A **phenomenon** which is not new but which has a new name is the mompreneur. These are **inventive** women who are home on maternity leave with a baby and see a **unique** opportunity to fill a gap in products or services. Some have quit their original jobs to work only in their new company. This takes a lot of courage and some will fail but there is an amazing record for success in this venture if you are determined to stay at home with children, have a great idea that fills a need and are willing to devote most of your “free” time to it.

A Vancouver mom who had been laid off from her job decided to make soft leather slippers for babies that would not come off tiny feet. The cute Robeez are now sold across Canada and the United States and in 2006, she sold her home-based company for \$30.5 million dollars. Not bad for a mom who just wanted to keep slippers on her kid.

Another mom who loved to dance and was home on leave wanted some extra money so began dance classes for moms and babies. The lively music appealed to the fun-loving babies and dancing helped the moms lose their baby weight. In 2 short years her company has grown to 15 cities across North America with hundreds of classes each week. She sells music CDs, DVDs, clothing and accessories and is well on her way to millions.

After a frightening time in a pool with a two year old and a slippery baby, a young mom wanted to find a baby boat that would let the baby enjoy the water but keep him safe. She designed and made a sample which became such a hit at the pool when other moms wanted one that she now has the boats for sale across Canada and soon available in Europe, Australia and South Korea.

From natural skin products that **soothe** prickly bums to organic baby food designed to grow healthy little people to **one-of-a-kind** bibs, baby carriers, catering to schools, every idea is **potentially** a winner. The mompreneurs all have one thing in common – they saw a need for something they wanted themselves but couldn’t find a satisfactory product in the stores. They commonly will answer the question about how they got their idea, “I couldn’t find what I wanted, so I made it myself”. The **light bulb went on**; they got to work and never looked back.

VOCABULARY

salary	pay for work
entrepreneur	a person who has own business
the leading edge	at the front of the crowd
bonanza	prize
take the plunge start	by taking the risk
venture	business project
start-ups	new businesses
majority	the greater part
phenomenon	event, occurrence
inventive	creative
unique	different, only one like it
soothe	heal, take pain away
one-of-a-kind	no other is the same
potentially	possibly
light bulb went on	an idea came into her head

DIALOGUE

What's the Greatest Invention?

In this dialogue, you will listen to a community college class give their opinions about the most important ideas that have changed the world.

Before you listen, think about:

- What would you consider to be the most important inventions in this world?
- What could you not live without?
- What would the world be like if some things had never been invented?

Setting: A community college class for people learning about starting their own small business. The instructor wants to stimulate creative thinking by beginning with a discussion.

Instructor: Okay, today I want to begin with some brainstorming from all of you about creativity. You are taking this class to learn about small business and how to become entrepreneurs so you all have some unique ideas which you think could make a good business. You are not alone. All through history, inventive people have thought up new things which they create and offer to the world. Some are flops and we never hear about them again while other inventions change the world and people everywhere.

So I want you to think of inventions that have done just that – changed the world. What are the greatest inventions of all time? Let's brainstorm and make a list.

Student 1: Are you thinking of basic things that have been around forever but that must have been created at some point? Like water, the wheel, shoes, knives or hammers?

Instructor: No, let's not talk about the old, old things. There have been some amazing things invented like the boat – where would the world be without the boat or the wheel. Let's talk about basic things today that we could never survive without.

Student 2: How about electricity? Where would we be without being able to turn on the lights or plug in our computers?

Instructor: I would say that electricity is not an invention but a discovery of something that always existed. You're not far off though. I think an important invention is the way we create, use, and store electricity. Where would we be without the wires, towers, power plants and the systems in our homes and buildings? Two men are mostly responsible for the leading-edge thinking about electricity: Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla. Okay, what's another invention?

Student 1: I know that the printing press created the phenomena of getting books into the hands of common people. This changed the world in a great way from telling stories and using memory to writing things down for all to read. It also had the bonus of making people learn to read so that today a majority of countries have literate populations. We couldn't get along today without signs, books, words on the computer screen and labels on medicine.

Student 3: Oh, I have one. The toilet and water systems. (Everyone laughs) No, really, just think where a city would be without a way to get fresh water to people and take away the waste. Potentially, there could not be a city without the toilet, sewers and water pipes. You couldn't have high-rise buildings, office buildings or towers of any kind. You couldn't have millions of people living together. That's my vote for most important.

Instructor: You know you make a good argument for the toilet. That's a good addition to our list.

Student 2: I read a book about the history of the clock. Before a clock was invented, people only had the sundial and we know that they aren't very useful at night or on a cloudy day. After someone took the plunge and put gears, hands, and springs together, time started to be regular and the same everywhere. Minutes are made up of seconds and days are made of hours. Of course, then every city or country had their own time. They set their clocks by the sun and all were different. It was a Canadian who created Standard Time so that the world now has time zones to keep the clocks the same.

Instructor: You are absolutely right. I never thought about the clock before. Good one!

Student 3: I can't decide between the telephone or the car. Both were leading edge ventures when they were first created. I couldn't get along without either of them. Can you imagine life without a car?

Student 1: I don't think we could live without antibiotics and medicines. Think of the shots kids get today that keep them healthy and the diseases that used to kill so many people. If we didn't have antibiotics, we could die from simple infections and bad colds that turn into pneumonia.

Instructor: Those are all great ideas that for some creative people the light bulb went on one day and they got to work. The bonanza is that they spread around the world and made it a better world for everyone. Okay, let's keep going. No one has mentioned the computer or the internet yet. Could you live without them?

EXERCISES

Exercise 1

Vocabulary Match

Match the correct word to its definition:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. salary | ___ at the front of the crowd |
| b. entrepreneur | ___ start by taking the risk |
| c. the leading edge | ___ business project |
| d. bonanza | ___ event, occurrence |
| e. take the plunge | ___ new businesses |
| f. venture | ___ different, only one like it |
| g. start-ups | ___ creative |
| h. majority | ___ a person who has own business |
| i. phenomenon | ___ no other is the same |
| j. inventive | ___ possibly |
| k. unique | ___ an idea came into her head |
| l. soothe | ___ prize |
| m. one-of-a-kind | ___ pay for work |
| n. potentially | ___ heal, take pain away |
| o. light bulb went on | ___ the greater part |

Exercise 2

Sentences

Fill in the blanks in each sentence by choosing the correct word from the vocabulary list.

1. We know that every child is _____ but twins share a lot of the same looks and behaviours.
2. Hana couldn't figure out what to do with clutter of toys in the apartment then suddenly a _____ and she knew just what to do.

3. Surveys show that a _____ of employees are unhappy with the _____ they receive for their work each week.
4. Safety experts say that there are _____ dangerous things in every house that could harm children such as electrical outlets and poisonous cleaners kept under a sink.
5. Go ahead, _____ and say yes to marriage to your nice boyfriend.
6. Although Halima wanted to become an _____ by opening her own store, she was afraid that the _____ might fail.
7. We enjoy so much _____ technology today that we forget that computers, MP3 players and cell phones are a fairly new _____ that wasn't around 25 years ago.
8. The invention was so popular that it was a real _____ for the mompreneur who first thought of it.
9. I find that a nice cup of tea and soft music will _____ my nerves after a busy day at work.
10. I enjoy the decorating magazine because it always has _____ ideas and _____ solutions to problems around the house.

Exercise 3

Writing

Use the vocabulary words and other words from the article to write 10 sentences that are interesting and fun to read.

You are the mompreneur: Do you have a great idea for something that is needed but you can't find in the store? Would you like to be an inventor and make a million? Write in a paragraph or two, your ideas of what you would invent or make. Why did you think of it? Who would buy it, what problems would it solve? Send this to your instructor and be prepared to speak about it with her.

For Additional Information:

There is a lot of information about mompreneurs on the internet. Just type in mompreneur and you will find many sites to go to. Here are a few:

Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla lit up the world

<http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/bledisonbiography.htm>

Sir Sandford Fleming wanted the trains to run on time. Also, a Historical Minute.

<http://inventors.about.com/od/fstartinventors/a/SandfordFleming.htm>

<http://www.histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10182>

A list of important inventions, the inventors and the year of the inventions.

<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/RefMedia.aspx?refid=461532659&artrefid=761577404&sec=-1&pn=1>

The Encyclopedia Britannica's List of Greatest Inventions of all time.

http://www.edinformatics.com/inventions_inventors/

Article with lots of info – Wanna Be a Mompreneur?

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/startingabusiness/mompreneur/article163552.html>

Magazine – Mompreneur

<http://www.themompreneur.com/>

Books - Mompreneur

<http://www.amazon.com/tag/mompreneur>

Website – Mompreneurs On-line

<http://www.mompreneuronline.com/index.htm>