



Judy Harrison, High Impact Productions, INC

I became a business owner 11 years ago. My business is a production company called High Impact Productions, INC. The company has 2 bands, a 10 piece swing band and a 7 piece country/oldies rock band. High Impact productions also offers voice and on camera work for radio, television, training and product DVDs.

Before forming my production company I was performing in several professional groups as well as doing TV commercials for The Comfort Centers and voiceover work for Saturn and other various clients. I worked for years in the entertainment business always working for others. I found I wanted to be able to do more than just make money singing. I wanted to keep growing as a performer, perform at more than just bars and weddings and I longed to record an original CD and much more. Most of all, I think I wanted to be in control of my destiny! After getting the legalities of setting up a business in place I invested in sound equipment that was "chick" friendly. I needed to be able to lift it myself and it needed to fit in my van, which was all I had for transportation to jobs. I needed to be able to set up for a job on my own if I had to. I began to hire players and back up singers. I found rehearsal space at a friends store downtown and I began work on finding a producer in Nashville for my first CD. I quickly got a loan, put together a promotional package and joined organizations that hired our type of entertainment. Soon thereafter I went to Nashville, recorded my first CD and hit the ground running trying to sell our country band High Impact to fairs and festivals around the state. Not long after that I hired a booking agent to help with promotion. It was important to me to be busy performing, but not too busy since I was a stay at home mom with young twin boys. Being a mom that was around for my kids was of vital importance to me.

I'm not sure how prepared I actually was to be a business owner. I had learned a lot from simply being in the business for many years. I think I learned a lot of things I didn't want to do if I had my own company. I guess a lot of it has been trial and error over the years as well as a ton of hard work, heartache and gratification. I wouldn't change it for the world.

My biggest inspiration has most definitely been my husband Brad. He has supported me in this crazy business since the day we met. I specifically remember my first radio job. I would never have accepted it if not for his confidence in me. It was a huge leap, way out of my comfort zone and frankly I was terrible at the start, but with his encouragement I kept plugging away until it became second nature. Not only did the Mayor present me with a key to the city on my last day, but that job opened my career in both radio voice work as well as television. I can honestly say that without Brad's support it would have ever happened.

Business ownership allows me to call the shots. If it succeeds or fails I'm responsible. That is important to me. I also have the freedom to make my own schedule, and the power to be sure I

continue to change and grow. Working with talented people, like in any business is key and also very rewarding. I'm lucky to be able to surround myself with the best. The relationships that have been formed are irreplaceable. In many ways they have just had blind faith in me and the journey I wanted to take them on.

I think what has surprised me most in owning a business like mine is the misconception that if a client hires someone from out of town they are getting a better product. I'm certain I'm not the only local business that has had to battle this misconception. I think this area has some of the most amazingly talented people in all aspects of business. In my opinion, we usually don't need to go elsewhere.

My motivation is easy to keep. I'm simply not ready to stop. Performing is inside of me. It has to come out. Touching and moving people with entertainment is exciting. People need ways to escape the every day stresses of life. I feel I escape each and every time I step on stage. I realize that I can't front a band forever, but as I get older, I'm certain I will find ways to continue the path of High Impact Productions. I just know I want to continue to grow and change.

My advice to other women in business is to find ways to not only fulfill your company goals, but to remember to give back to your community with those talents you possess. That is something I've been searching to do for a long time. I feel that in 2008 I have finally done it with our Swing Shift and the Stars-Dance Off for Charity. Being able to use High Impact Productions to give back to the community has probably been the most rewarding experience in my career. It's awesome to use my talents that got me started in business in the first place to help others along the way.

High Impact Productions has come a long way over the last 11 years. I'm very proud of our accomplishments. It's my business, but I can't take the credit for all that we've done. The talent, support, commitment and friendship of the people I've worked with got us to where we are today. Through the good, bad and the ugly we have worked as a team. Now we are able to boast 2 fabulous bands, 5 CD's, we travel to gigs in a cool RV, and rehearse in a beautiful studio. We've been nominated for 3 Detroit Music awards, and performed for tens of thousands of people. The list goes on and on, but most of all we've made memories that will last a lifetime.

I say to any woman that has the desire to start her own business, "go for it!" As my father told me when I was getting ready to start High Impact Productions, "keep your cool, keep your confidence and keep on driving!"