

What's it like to be a Mumentrepreneur

Submitted by: Crafty Computer Paper Ltd

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A Mumentrepreneur is a woman who has started her own business and juggles being a full time mum at the same time. 'How can you do this' some people will ask, the answer will be 'with great difficulty but the rewards are fantastic'.

The internet has opened so many opportunities for woman who would normally be stuck at home looking after the baby. Many have set up successful on-line businesses which means they can work out of their spare bedroom and fill the washing machine and change a nappy at the same time. EBay has opened up opportunities because two thirds of UK web traffic visits the site each day. These mums now have an instant market to sell their wares. The types of businesses being set up are anything from buying and selling children's cloths, affiliate marketing sites to making greetings cards and artwork to sell on line. It's a great way of making money without having to walk out of the front door.

One successful Mumentrepreneur is Charlotte Gaisford who set up a company called www.CraftyComputerPaper.co.uk from her spare bedroom.

The company sells all different kinds of inkjet papers and fabrics to create with using a home inkjet printer. The company is the first of its kind in the UK. She started the business when her two little boys were just 4 and 2 years old. She had little or no support from friends and family to start the business, they could not understand why she wanted to do it. She wanted a challenge and something to think about other than changing nappies and baby talk.

She was a creative person and starting a business was her way out of Nappy Land and mild post natal depression. Charlotte managed to teach herself the basics of web design and wrote her own website, she imported products from The States initially and then started selling on-line in March 2003. She remembers marketing and marketing all the time and went onto every forum she could to try and spread the word about her business. Sometimes when her customers phoned up she had to hide in the bathroom so the caller could not hear the baby noises going on in the background. Quite often her then 4 year old would answer the phone and this would totally blow the cover of a professional business image she had created on the web site. Other times she would be making an important deal on the telephone and she would hear the dredged words of 'I've finished' coming from the down stairs loo, with the phone in one hand and a wad of loo roll in the other she had to carry on the conversation, none the wiser to the caller.

The response to her business was fantastic and after a few months she was over whelmed with orders and was doubling her turnover every month. She still managed to pick up and drop off her children from school and nursery. If she wanted a day off from the children to work she had to do drop off and pick up from school and various childminders five times in the day. Her husband was not too pleased she was working because he wanted her to devote all her time to the cooking, cleaning etc. which she still continued to do. Eventually in June 2003 she employed a part time cleaner and took on her first member of staff.

The company has moved three times since the spare bedroom and has now converted a barn, purpose built for the business, she now employs 5 members of staff. She sells all over the world and imports from all over the world. The company has appeared many times on the shopping channels and exhibited at the NEC,

Birmingham. Charlotte received an award in 2005 for North-East woman entrepreneur for IT. She was so proud to have won this award as it proved to her critics that it was all worth while. She is now taken seriously in business and people value her opinion.

Self achievement and financial independence is so important to Mumentrepreneur, especially when they have been used to earning their own living. Women are now having babies much later in life and before Nappy Land they might have had a successful career. This is all taken away plus their freedom when they start having babies. Having a baby is the most rewarding thing you could ever do in your life but your life still needs to go on. After birth you can lose your identity, you become the boring mother pushing the pram in the park. People start to talk through you instead of at you. Starting a business is great for the confidence of women after birth. Some women are very happy to stay at home and look after the children and keep the home fires burning, and there is nothing wrong with that but when the children reach a certain age they don't need you as much, and you do find you have a little extra time to yourself. You still need to be at school gates to pick up or be available to watch the school play and look after the children when they are ill. You have to be a certain type of person who has determination and drive to get where you want to go. It is very possible to start a business when you have young children, you can still do everything you are meant to do and with a little drive still have an adult life.

Charlotte Gaisford now turns over ¼ million pounds a year from her on-line business and has become a Limited company. She is continuing to grow from strength to strength. She painstakingly has looked after her children full time, been the main parent carer, picked them up from school 99% of the time, seen every school play and swimming gala, looked after them when they were ill. It has only been since Easter 2007 with great resentment that she has had to employ a nanny to look after the children in the holidays and this is only from 9-5pm.

What's hard about being a Mumentrepreneur is having so many people to look after; you have the family and all the staff that work for you. Nowadays families are not extended and live many miles away from Granny who would come to baby-sit at a drop of a hat, this means trying to find a reliable childminder difficult. It's also hard knowing that the livelihoods of the staff are in your hands, you have to work hard and take on all the responsibility of the business because you know you have to earn enough to pay their wages. It's a little like wearing a 50lbs backpack and never being able to take it off. The good side of being a mumentrepreneur is being able to make financial decisions and buying things for yourself and the rest of the family and not having to ask your husband for money.

It's important that women get a chance to succeed in business. 'Women in business' sounds a bit frightening and you imagine power suits and shoulder pads but this is not the normal woman in business. Charlotte goes to work everyday in a pair of jeans, she is the most un-high powered business woman ever but she managed to do it with grit and determination. There should be more incentives for women even if it was £50 a week to help towards a cleaner or childminder this would give mums an opportunity to have more time to develop their ideas and continue with their businesses. So many mums have great ideas and skills which are never allowed to develop because they are the main child carer of the family. It is such a shame that this rich resource cannot be supported. Don't underestimate the power of the Mumentrepreneur, there will be many more success stories to come in the not too distant future.

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