



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

WORK WORLD

NATALIE BURNS chose to tackle what may be the most challenging business of all – retail clothing. With the financial collapse of many national retailers, the clothing business must bring headaches to many store owners. Natalie, however, is proof that the determination to succeed can conquer many obstacles.

Natalie established her business in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, in 1994. Still in her early 20s, she was already a seasoned businesswoman when she opened a local franchise of Work World. She previously owned a honey business and supplied products to many local grocery and convenience stores. The experience provided valuable business lessons and cultivated her desire to pursue her entrepreneurial dreams.

“When I first started out, it was really difficult for young people to find any work here in the area,” she recalls.

“There weren’t many opportunities and a lot of our businesses were having a tough time. But this is my home and I decided this is where I want to live. So I started looking around to see what I could do.” She identified a need in the market and seized her opportunity.

“Eventually I realized that no one around here had really tapped into the casual and work clothes market,” she says. “I knew this was my chance.” She set to work developing a business plan and strategy to launch a Work World franchise. It took more than \$100,000 to get the business off the ground, and raising the capital wasn’t easy. She was able to arrange financing from the federal Small Business Loans Program and a guarantee from the PEI New Entrepreneur Program.

One of the biggest challenges she has encountered was building a reputation with potential customers. “It’s hard



Barrett and Mackley

getting established in the market. I made a lot of contacts with small business organizations in the area and built a strong relationship with our customers. Also, as a franchisee, I can draw on marketing expertise of our head office,” she confides.

Her efforts and inspiration have not

gone unnoticed. After just one year in business, Work World recognized Natalie’s store as the ‘Best Run Work World Store in Canada’.

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“There are a lot of great things about being in business,” she continues. “Once you have great staff in place and a steady volume of customers, you get a great sense of achievement every time you succeed.”

Her admirable business sense

may come naturally. Natalie is from a family with a history of entrepreneurial interests, and many of her relatives passed along “valuable advice that you can’t learn in a textbook”. Even with her amazing accomplishments, she realizes there is still much to learn. She will continue to grow her business

wisely and may even branch into something totally different. “Whatever you do, do your homework. Cover every possible scenario and try to imagine the worst possible thing that could happen. If you think you can survive it... Go for it! It takes hard work, determination, imagination and some business experience, but it’s worth it!”

Natalie Burns

WHERE TO REACH NATALIE BURNS

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