

## Two 'mumtrepreneurs' share their advice

### **We spoke with two Irish mothers who have managed to turn their hobbies into full-time careers.**

For some mothers, the arrival of a child can signal the start of a slow down, or downright pause, in their career. However, for others, it can be just the opposite. More and more we see “mumtrepreneurs” rising up to start a business.

If you're not familiar with the term, you soon will be. By simple definition, mumtrepreneur refers to a mum who is also an entrepreneur. Fairly self-explanatory. While looking after a child is a full-time job, it seems there are a lot of enterprising Mammies out there who are finding the time to set up their businesses in between school runs and night feeds. Often, their ideas don't start out as a business, but through want or need, a lot of women end up running mini-empires from their kitchen tables, thanks to the advancements in technology and social media.

We spoke with two Irish mothers who have managed to turn their hobbies into full-time careers.

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**Nikki Whelan, [Little Bow Pip](#) - boutique owner & co-director of Back Street Dance Studios**

For Irish business owner Nikki Whelan, her idea for a baby bow headband company came about when she found out she was expecting a baby girl. Already a mother of one, Nikki knew that the lives of her and husband Gavin were about to become awash with tones of pink and purple. Even before little Pippa came into the world, Nikki had a stash of outfits collected, ready to be worn when her daughter finally did make her arrival. However, she struggled to find matching headbands, and she found the ones she could find were uncomfortable and left marks on Pippa's head. To solve her problem, she took matters into her hands and simply started making her own. A new business was born.

“Every time I was out and about with Pippa, people would stop and ask about her hair bands. And, so it began,” explains Nikki.

She nervously launched her “Little Bow Pip” Facebook page one evening, and within 24 hours she amassed over 2,000 followers. From there, her fan base grew, and six weeks later she invested in a stand at the Pregnancy & Baby Fair in the RDS. Fast-forward 18 months later and Little Bow Pip has over 20,000 followers on its social media platforms with some new (and top secret) projects in the pipeline.

So, what advice does this serial mumtrepreneur have for other budding business owners? Simple. Use social media.

“Without social media for me, I wouldn't have all of my 20,000+ customers. I wouldn't have found my amazingly talented seamstress Claire. It takes up the majority of your working day, as you must always be switched on and plugged in. But, without it, I wouldn't be where I am today.”

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**Lorna Sixsmith, *The Irish Farmerette*, author of *Would You Marry a Farmer?*, *How to be a Perfect Farm Wife* and *An Ideal Farm Husband***

Lorna Sixsmith, farmer and author, (not two words you'd usually put together) was a blogger who dreamed of one day writing her book. When one of her blog posts, written in September 2012 entitled 'Advice to those considering marrying a farmer', became viral on social media, the idea for her book was born.

Having attended a talk on crowdfunding in June 2013, and thinking that this would be the perfect way to help her self-publish, she launched her crowdfunding campaign the following month and within five weeks, had raised the €6,000 required.

Four months later, the book was written, edited, produced and there were a thousand copies sitting in her hallway waiting to be sold. Interviews with the likes of Ryan Tubridy helped to propel sales but it was the topic of marrying farmers, as well as sharing the humour in farming life, that seemed to be striking a chord with readers.

Sixsmith agrees that running her own business has given her more freedom as a mother, although it's not without its downsides. She can work around her children – school holidays, collecting them, helping with homework, bringing them to activities and all the other ad-hoc responsibilities that go hand-in-hand with being a parent – although it does mean burning the candle at both ends sometimes.

She acknowledges that social media and technology have a big part to play in her success.

“My book wouldn't have happened without my blog – it gave me the idea and the support from my blog readers. Twitter was the most effective platform for securing pledges during the crowdfunding campaign, and some of my press coverage has come about as a result of chatting to journalists on Twitter”.

And, her advice to other budding mumtrepreneurs out there? Use social media well.

“Social media is a wonderfully effective tool for engagement but remember it is about being conversational, not about using hard sales techniques.”

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