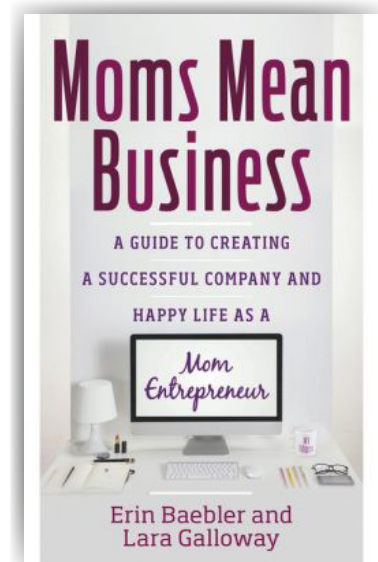


Moms Mean Business

*A Guide to Creating a Successful Company
and Happy Life as a Mom Entrepreneur*

Erin Baebler and Lara Galloway

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KEY CONCEPTS

- *The authentic self.* Mom entrepreneurs must first uncover their authentic selves (including what their desires are for the future), determine individual priorities, and tap into their true passions.
- *Envisioning success.* It is essential that mom entrepreneurs map out individual paths to a successful life so they can visualize the state of being a prosperous business owner.
- *Time management.* Those who want their businesses to succeed need to be sharply realistic in terms of how much available time they will be able to devote to the venture.
- *Self-care.* Moms with businesses need to make and take the time to maintain their physical and mental health, and they need to buy into the numerous benefits of doing so.
- *The essential toolkit.* Mom entrepreneurs should take stock of usable traits, transferrable skills, and personality strengths so they are familiar with the tools at their disposal and aware of how using them can benefit their businesses.
- *Business planning.* Savvy mom entrepreneurs can comprehend how important it is to scrutinize their businesses, set targets for each significant phase, and create simple business plans to which they consistently adhere.
- *Productivity tools.* A full breakdown of productivity, by type, will help business-minded moms understand how to enhance productivity and work within reasonable, necessary boundaries.
- *Staying on track.* Successful business moms should embrace the lessons they have learned from making mistakes, facing fear, and developing accountability. These circumstances are sure to be part of their ongoing business experiences.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In the United States alone, women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men, and many of those women are moms. In **Moms Mean Business**, Erin Baebler and Lara Galloway target moms who want to be entrepreneurs—and those with businesses already underway—who need support and advice on how to optimally juggle family and business concerns. The authors discuss the importance of a relatable business plan, realistic time management, continued self-care, and identifying and staying true to one's authentic self. They provide clear, practical strategies for all phases of starting up, nurturing, and running a successful business.

PART I: OWN YOUR LIFE

Who You Are

Any woman with an entrepreneurial spirit will benefit from doing the initial work of discovering who she is and comprehending what goals are worth the effort needed to achieve them. It is important for mom entrepreneurs to map out their immediate circumstances in ways that will reveal what standards and ideals they want to live up to. They need to be certain that what they plan to undertake aligns with what is most important to them in their lives. Individual values, priorities, motivators, and passions will combine to draw a clear picture of what is possible for the mom entrepreneur. Additionally, each entrepreneur must take into consideration whatever limitations are present in her life and their potential impact on the business model. Living in a way that matches up with their core values will provide mom entrepreneurs with a sense of satisfaction and emphasize the significance of understanding their authentic selves before they embark on new business ventures.

Your sense of satisfaction and fulfillment will always be a direct reflection of how clearly you determine what you want and how closely you are following a plan to achieve it.

Envisioning Success

How each entrepreneur envisions success lays the groundwork for the direction in which the business will grow. Success is usually about more than income or how the business compares to its competition. A useful exercise for beginners is to write down everything that comes to mind when thinking of the term *success*. Mom entrepreneurs should make sure to keep their visions up to date and recognize that they will become clearer over time, as accomplishments are reassessed in terms of their effect on the business owner's lifestyle. A vision, like life, will tend to be fluid.

Moms should be especially careful to avoid comparing themselves to others, because there is always someone else who will appear to be more efficient, successful, or intelligent. Comparison results in feelings of not measuring up, which will only serve to hinder the progress of any mom's business efforts. Some moms may try to do it all, and as a result will need to become better at saying "no" more often. No one can really do it all, and any attempt to do so will cause disappointment and frustration.

Time Management

Current or aspiring mom entrepreneurs should write down everything they do each day, in 15-minute increments. They should then connect activities to priorities and see how well these match up, if they do at all. Women who focus their time on their priorities will experience the satisfaction of increased productivity; those who give in to old habits (such as doing things in less focused or efficient ways) will likely experience exhaustion and disappointment.

Mom entrepreneurs should also create “hit lists” of tasks that can be accomplished in 15 minutes, to be completed whenever a 15-minute block of time becomes available. To ensure that work time remains sacred and is used as intended, they need to instill personal boundaries; this also serves to keep available time from being wasted.

Successful mom entrepreneurs record all tasks and appointments on calendars, in either electronic or paper format, to effectively reserve time slots for tasks that absolutely must be accomplished. Recorded appointments are more likely to be kept, and tasks are less likely to be overlooked in favor of habitual, time-wasting activities.

Self-Care

Self-care must not be ignored; it replenishes the enormous amount of effort required to keep a family and growing business afloat. Good self-care increases a mom entrepreneur’s sense of well-being, imparts a self-confidence that seeps into the business, and helps prevent burnout. Self-care rituals should be recorded on the same calendar as the business-driven tasks to safeguard their importance.

The authors recommend numerous self-care activities for mom entrepreneurs, all of which should be done *guilt-free*, to prevent counterproductive anxiety from creeping in. Examples include the following:

The to-do list will never go away, so instead of entering into a 50-year abusive conversation with yourself, maybe you could shift your thinking and give yourself a nice little pat on the back at the end of each day for a job well done.

- Maintain hair/manicure/massage appointments. Light candles and add a glass of wine to the bath ritual.
- Use online guidance for short meditation sessions.
- Spend extra time in the garden.
- Overcome the reluctance to ask for help and off-load tasks that someone else can easily do.
- Practice deep-breathing exercises.
- Have a cup of coffee or tea.
- Play a game with the kids.
- Spend time with family, friends, or a partner on the telephone or in person.
- Go for a walk.
- Play with the family pet.
- Take a short nap.
- Sit down to read something indulgent—that is, not business related.

PART II: OWN YOUR BUSINESS

The Toolkit

Many mom entrepreneurs do not recognize that they have myriad tools at their disposal, from personality traits to education and work experience, as well as strong support systems.

Moms should begin by assessing their strengths, an exercise that can be helped along using Tom Rath’s Strengthsfinder 2.0. They should remember to add in a list of skills and personality traits, such as *grit* and the perseverance and passion to meet goals and stick with a business plan. Grit is essential and must be there in the background for whenever a mom entrepreneur needs to summon it to overcome unforeseen obstacles.

Confidence, courage, and patience play a vital role in the life and business of a mom entrepreneur. Confidence can be built from failure, or as a reaction to starting anew in the face of it. Courage comes into play when moving

forward, even when feeling vulnerable, and it is a trait that can be bolstered by taking risks. Every risk that is taken and survived results in increased courage and confidence. Patience involves listening to an inner voice for guidance and exhibiting grace while in pursuit of the goals of the business.

A mom entrepreneur's family, friends, other moms, business acquaintances, mentors, and anyone who is a part of a mom's network constitute her own strong support system—or her own personal human resources department.

Another important tool a mom should consider when making an assessment of personal resources is *intuition*. Moms should never ignore or discount their own intuitive feelings. There will certainly be moments that indicate a mom entrepreneur's intuition was right on target and should have been heeded. Intuition can save entrepreneurs time, money, and effort; it is worthy of respect and attention.

Business Planning

Now that the mom entrepreneur has determined who she is, what she wants, what resources she has available, and how best to use them, her next important task is to create a simple, one-page business plan. The first step in this process is to determine what stage the business is in, as each will require a different focus and strategy. The authors identify the stages as:

- *Pregnancy*: In this stage, all possibilities for the business exist. It is an exciting time, but is often accompanied by occasional doubts and fear of failure. During this stage, a mom entrepreneur should define the business in terms of what should be offered, who is likely to become a customer, how the business will present the mom's best skills and honor her priorities, and how it will differ from the competition. This is also a good time to ensure that self-care continues and the mom's support system is available if needed.
- *Birth*: When the business is launched, intense focusing and planning are required. Because moms can easily become exhausted during this phase, it is important to have a carefully crafted marketing and sales plan that addresses customer service, fulfillment, and follow up, along with other crucial business-support functions. During this stage, mom entrepreneurs may need to hire others to help with everything from child care to website maintenance.
- *Infancy*: The business will need a lot of focus and hard work if it is to survive and grow. Business owners may have to deal with the frustration of expending great effort without receiving full financial rewards. Self-care is even more important during this stage, as it may be the first thing neglected by a heavily taxed mom entrepreneur.
- *Toddlerhood*: This is the growing and stretching phase of the business, a time when the mom entrepreneur will learn from early mistakes, understand what strengths are being put to use, and what adjustments need to be made now or in the future. This is a good time for women to set financial goals, expand into social media, tweak their businesses' websites, and consider additional products or offerings.
- *Adolescence*: This stage usually marks the appearance of income, with the bonus of recovering some of the initial investment. It is a good time for a business owner to refine her priorities and evaluate the direction of the business to determine if it is on the right path. Partnerships that might help to expand the reach of the business could be explored. It also presents an opportunity to raise fees or to consider targeting a different audience.

Grit, that unwillingness or even inability to give up, can be a big asset. Some might call it stubbornness; what we know about it, though, is that even if every day can't be a total success, keeping at something that you truly want to do and that reflects who you are will lead to great things.

- *Teenagerhood*: As expected, this is a long stage. It encompasses making improvements to the business, from product offerings to marketing to processes. Mom entrepreneurs could benefit from attending seminars or conferences to learn new approaches, as it is important to continue working to improve what may already seem to be more than adequate. Travel might be involved, or the hiring of new employees, but it is also a time to examine ways to reduce expenses. An entrepreneur should also take time to create a business plan for the coming year.
- *Maturity*: Finally, the mom entrepreneur's business may be able to function on its own, enabling the mom to take a vacation. This may be a good time to create an exit strategy and meet with an attorney to evaluate the business and the family's assets.

[W]hen you are constantly measuring your self-worth by what others have accomplished, it's a losing battle. Instead, how about setting some benchmarks for yourself and then taking action on them?

Once the business plan is created, the mom entrepreneur must identify the goals of the business that make up the vision of success. She should then answer the following questions:

- What is being built/created? (What is the market being served?)
- Why does the business exist? (What are the motivators behind its creation?)
- How will its success be measured? (Through income, web hits, number of followers, number of purchases?)

Additional steps include:

- Setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-related (*SMART*) goals. Women should be very specific when setting *SMART* goals, and include time constraints—for example, "Hire 14 people by July 1."
- Setting personal goals, which are an important part of the mom entrepreneur equation. These should also be specific and measurable.
- Including an action plan that lists individual objectives and possible strategies to use in accomplishing each goal, with a corresponding action for each strategy.

Productivity Tools

Putting all of this preparation to work is the next phase for mom entrepreneurs. There are certain boundaries they must respect, however, in order to be productive. For example, personal tasks such as doing laundry, responding to Facebook or email messages, or answering personal calls are all distractions that can erode the day's allotment of working time. Sometimes all that is needed is to be aware of when a break is needed, and then schedule it; these distractions can be attended to then and may seem less enticing afterward.

One common hindrance to productivity is an inability to delegate. It makes sense for a mom entrepreneur to delegate those tasks at which she is not most adept or does not enjoy performing as much as others; she can then free herself for more important business endeavors. Another hindrance to watch out for is the tendency to resist change. An entrepreneur who is open to change can often increase productivity by implementing newer, more efficient ways of accomplishing business or personal tasks.

Entrepreneurs should continually evaluate their productivity and their ability to manage their time. An entrepreneur who is not skilled at estimating how long a particular task will take will be unable to meet goals and become discouraged or frustrated. It is therefore always worthwhile to work on accurately estimating the time needed for various tasks.

Mom entrepreneurs can use many tools to increase productivity:

- *The Pomodoro technique* breaks tasks into equal time increments with set breaks in between, such as working for 25 minutes, taking a 5-minute break, then working for 25 minutes again.
- *Project mapping* is the method of plugging tasks into available slots on the calendar, after determining how long each task will take to complete. This type of scheduling reinforces the idea of actually doing the work during that period, as opposed to leaving it to chance, such as when some spare time becomes available.
- *The Pareto principle* assumes that 20 percent of a given thing is vital, while the other 80 percent is not. Mom entrepreneurs can apply this by calculating which tasks from the pile are the most important, or fit in the 20-percent category, and focusing only on those.
- *The four Qs of productivity* involves creating a quadrant for efficiently sorting tasks, determining which ones must be done, which are most likely to generate income and build revenue, and which ones simply consume valuable time and resources.
- *Tapping into personal circadian rhythms* gives mom entrepreneurs insight as to what time of the day or night they are most productive, which can help them schedule important tasks accordingly.
- *Questioning* the viability of each task can lead to abandonment of any that are not actually necessary, which immediately increases productivity.
- *Grouping like tasks together* eliminates the concentration lost when transitioning from one kind of task to another.
- *Writing down the next day's plan the night before* means starting the day with a sharp focus.
- *Mom entrepreneurs should remember to add in breaks* to keep continued focus possible.

Being authentically you in business is definitely the way to go. A huge part of your potential success as a mom entrepreneur has to do with being true to yourself.

Once some or all of these techniques have been incorporated into the busy mom entrepreneur's lifestyle and schedule, she needs to have a plan to combat the inevitable loss of focus, and accompanying loss of interest, that can happen at any time. The resulting lack of productivity can be caused by a waning of excitement about the original business idea, or a mistake that can throw the business off track. Business mistakes provide excellent learning opportunities, and when overcome, usually result in a stronger focus on what is most important to the business.

Staying on Track

A mom entrepreneur can sometimes feel like she has fallen into a rut, which signals that it might be time to call on a member of her support system. Making small changes in their daily routines can sometimes be enough to enable mom entrepreneurs to shake off this sensation.

Fear and failure can go hand in hand—in fact, fear of failure is a common roadblock to entrepreneurial success. Fear itself is undermined by doing the very thing one fears the most, while failure is something that all business owners will experience. Failing provides a learning experience that is an important part of business success, and it can be overcome.

One of the most common obstacles for mom entrepreneurs centers on a lack of accountability. If no one else knows what work a mom is supposed to have under way, how will she guarantee its completion? It can be helpful for someone else to read and follow up on the business plan for a certain period of time, because once another person becomes involved, the chances for completion automatically increase.

A mom entrepreneur can also call on a mentor or professional business coach to help with accountability. Also, a built-in reward system can serve as an incentive to accomplish one or a set of important tasks within a predetermined time frame.

Once their businesses are fully operational, wise mom entrepreneurs will be sure to incorporate regular assessments of how priorities and values change in order to determine if scheduling adjustments are necessary. Additionally, revisiting the new principles they have learned on a regular basis will help busy mom entrepreneurs remain on track with their new ventures.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Estimated Reading Time: 3–4 hours, 288 pages

Moms Mean Business by Erin Baebler and Lara Galloway guides moms who want to start or improve a business but struggle to balance time and other constraints. The authors lay out comprehensive steps for mom entrepreneurs to follow, and advise factoring in reasonable measures for managing the pitfalls that may be encountered along the way. They offer a wealth of encouragement and wisdom taken from their own experiences as entrepreneurs, moms, and writers, as well as from other well-known businesswomen. The book includes notes, an index, and an appendix with ideas on how to use a virtual assistant to save time. The chapters are best read in order.

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