

Valley's 'mompreneurs' work the home front

Groups help women balance job, children

By Srianthi Perera
ARIZONA BUSINESS GAZETTE

It's a familiar scenario throughout much of the Valley: "mompreneurs," women with children, opting to work from home.

And it's a scenario that could take off in the four economy as more mothers aim to go into business for themselves to shave child-care expenses while spending more quality time with their kids.

But leaving traditional workplaces to establish home-based businesses has its challenges. That's where other mompreneurs come in as women across the country reach out to each other through business groups that offer them support

"It's tough finding that balance and making it work, but I do feel very blessed that I have my office at home and I have flexibility."

Shelley Valdez
Gilbert mother and businesswoman

and resources.

One such group, Biz Mom Connections, which was established two years ago in Florida and recently went national.

Tisha Marie Pelletier, whose baby son, Caleb, is only 5 months old, is setting up a Gilbert chapter and is looking for members.

"I'm thankful I have clients who know I have a baby," said Pelletier, who runs Simply Put, a marketing and event-plan-



Patrice Derbas of Blitz Graphics (from left), photographer Shelley Valdez and Tisha Marie Pelletier of Simply Put are all mothers who run businesses from their homes.

INSIDE

Minilight a bright idea

A special-education teacher partners with an engineer to market a cost-effective light tiny enough to attach to small items, such as keys. **Page 4**

Deals

Major real-estate transactions throughout the Valley. **Page 2**

Conflict brewing over state energy policy

Lawmaker wants say in mandates by commission

By Howard Fischer
CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

A turf fight is brewing between a state lawmaker and the Arizona Corporation Commission over who has the right to tell utilities how they have to generate electricity.

Rep. Lucy Mason, R-Flagstaff,

"You can't do that when the utilities are addicted to natural gas and coal fired electricity."

Kris Mayes
Corporation Commission chairwoman, on determining the proper fuel mix for utilities

has crafted a measure that says the Legislature has the "exclusive power, authority and jurisdiction" to decide state energy policy.

Her proposal also spells out the ability to set mandates and targets for the use and produc-

tion of renewable energy.

Mason, who chairs the House Water and Energy Committee, is not trying to overturn the orders of the commission, which require all utilities to produce at least 15 percent of their power from renewable sources by

2025. In fact, HB 2623 specifically ratifies that commission decision.

But the legislation, if adopted, would tweak it.

The commission regulations require utilities to meet that goal with things like solar, wind, geothermal and biomass energy.

Mason's proposal would have the commission consider energy generated from hydroelectric dams and nuclear energy.

See **ENERGY** Page 25

INDEX

Housekeeping not covered

The Arizona Court of Appeals rules that an employee injured on the job is not entitled to workers' compensation benefits for a housekeeper. **Page 8**

Real estate **Page 2, 3**

INSIDE

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4 SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2009

Busy Scottsdale mother creates innovative NanoLite

Small key light a creative fix to daily challenge

By Patricia Bathurst
 SPECIAL FOR THE AZB

As a busy mother fumbled to unlock the front door while her children fidgeted, Madeline Canfield of Scottsdale knew there had to be an easier way to get the door open.

As a special education teacher, she was accustomed to creating innovative solutions to help her students adapt to everyday challenges. So when a classroom injury left her with similar challenges in solving every day tasks, she set out to find

As a special education teacher, she (Madeline Canfield) was accustomed to creating innovative solutions to help her students adapt to everyday challenges.

creative solutions to problems like getting a hard-to-find key into a lock. "I knew what I wanted," Canfield said. "Something you could hold in one hand and use the key."

She teamed up with engineer Paul Mioduski, who took Canfield's ideas and helped her create the world's smallest adhesive light.

The NanoLite is small enough to fit on the bow of a key, and is activated by touch. Its tiny lithium battery affords up to three years of use, and costs \$3.99.

Canfield, who describes herself as "a consummate teacher-learner," said that transforming her idea to a marketable product gave her an opportunity to "learn a lot, and in some things, more than even I wanted to know."

To work with Mioduski, for instance, she learned enough electronics to be able to describe exactly how she wanted her light to work. She also researched adhesives to understand what would be needed to keep the tiny light on a key, and she took a class in graphics to better understand packaging

NanoLite

- **What:** January Innovations, Inc.
- **Where:** 5907 North Rocking Road, Scottsdale.
- **Employees:** Madeline Canfield and Paul Mioduski.
- **Stats:** Around 100,000 NanoLites have been sold, retailing at about \$3.99 each.
- **Fun fact:** Users are developing creative uses for NanoLites such as attaching them to tools that go into dark corners.
- **Details:** www.nanolite.net



LUCY BABYAK
 Madeline Canfield's NanoLite.

and designing it. Canfield also did extensive research into similar products, which made her

See NANOLITE Page 23

SMALL BUSINESS

How to avoid small-business Web-site pitfalls

Dear Dan: With sales slumping, we really need our Web site to help generate more leads and revenue. But, frankly, the site as it is now doesn't provide much of a boost. How can we juice it up?

— **Woeful Web Site**

Dear Woeful: This is no time to be a Web-site weakling. Competition for attention online gets tougher by the day and having a Web presence that works for your business during difficult times is vital. If you expect a business boost from the Internet, you can't have a site that's dead in the water.

Here are some killer mis-



DANIEL KEHRER

services your business sells is vital to online success. Even if you think you know what they are, unless you've used a keyword-discovery tool to see the precise terms that real people are typing into search engines daily, you haven't done it right. KeywordDiscovery.com and the keyword tool at Google AdWords can help.

■ **Missing Measurements:** Who's visiting your site? Where are they coming from? What are they doing once they get there? What are the most and least popular portions of your site? What kinds of visitors are making you the most money? If you lack the answers, you aren't leveraging your site's potential. Sign up for a Web-analytics service such as Stat Counter, or install Web analytics software and start monitoring and measur-

location. Don't make people hunt for a separate "Contact us" page. Display your phone number prominently across your site. If you make it easy for people to call, they will. Be sure you have a process in place to follow up on all inquiries that come through your site, including e-mails.

■ **Crummy Content:** Off-target and poorly written content will make your site look second-rate. Provide helpful tips, case studies and other info that helps your intended audience solve a problem or accomplish a task. Avoid industry jargon and keep it conversational. Proofread carefully to avoid spelling and other errors. Hiring a freelance writer to create content for your site is a good way to go.

■ **Offshore Ordering:** Want people to order? You must make

visitors need.

■ **Waxed Visitors:** Many Web sites are just plain frustrating to visitors. The sites drone on about the company's virtues, force people to hunt for contact basics and fail to make the ordering process painless. Keep all order and lead-generation forms simple. The more information fields you require, the fewer people you'll get filling them out.

■ **Laughably Linkless:** If people can't find you online, you're toast. One thing that makes Google (and other search engines) take notice is how many quality sites link to yours. Other sites are more likely to link to yours if you offer helpful information such as tips, white papers, newsletters, a blog or other items. Sending out regular news releases on your business is one

latest news release is 2 years old or other content is clearly aging, customers will wonder how up to date and vibrant your business really is. Review and update all content on your site regularly to keep it fresh and timely.

■ **Dorky Design:** Yes, design does count. But it's not all about how great you are. It's about design that actually works to attract, keep and convert customers. Obvious cookie-cutter sites and over-the-top images undercut your goals. Customers are there because they want to accomplish something, and your design needs to keep that in mind.

■ **Posky Pages:** Cluttered, slow-loading pages that give users headaches just looking at them are the bane of many a small-biz Web site. Avoid

match, color, or think you're

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Innovative Scottsdale mother creates world's smallest adhesive light

NANOLITE

Continued from Page 4

certain there was nothing quite like her invention.

So while many cautioned her that securing a patent might be a laborious and lengthy process, NanoLite sailed through on its first application.

That spurred Canfield to establish January Innovations, Inc., to further develop, market and produce NanoLites, and eventually, other inventions designed to solve everyday problems.

"We initially hand-made every single light," Canfield said. That ended when demand

grew sufficiently to warrant factory production, currently in China. Demand for the little lights should increase with its recent introduction on Amazon.com.

The company also is teaming up with locksmiths to offer the little lights as part of lock replacement services.

"Extreme Geek just picked us up, and we're talking with a greeting card company about putting them into cards," Canfield said

The currently black-only NanoLites also will start to appear in colors.

Canfield, ever the teacher, intends to put her experiences in

developing and marketing her invention into a book to aid other inventors.

She also hinted that January Innovations may be expanding its product line.

"There are some new inventions," Canfield admitted, but she's not about to give away company secrets yet.