

ALL MAGAZINE



MAGAZINE

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AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2009

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 5

9780980405270

**HOW TO AVOID
"SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED
DEBT"**

**SHHH!
BUSINESS
SECRETS**

How Sara Blakely,
founder of SPANX,
made it BIG

**GET THE
LOWDOWN...**

on how to finally
slow down

**YOUR
UNIQUE
BEAUTY**

Secrets for women
around the world

Tyra Banks
The Brains Behind
the Beauty

WOMEN



Like a classical painter putting the finishing touches to a masterpiece, an entrepreneur is engaged in a creative enterprise. Maureen Kelly, Mei Xu, and Jacqueline Beauchamp are three talented CEOs whose imaginations have created unique and innovative products that helped them to build multi-million dollar companies.

Who





laboratories, and formulas, as well as playing around with some design ideas for packaging. Many days were spent cold-calling manufacturers until she found one that was the right fit for her fledgling company.

The first line was launched in Manhattan-based department store Henri Bendel in September 2000, and was an immediate success. Nine years on, and Tarte offers a wide selection of products packed with vitamins, minerals, and natural fruit and plant extracts. They are now available in more than 200 stores, and sales this year are expected to be around \$20 million.

Since the company's inception, Kelly has kept a close eye on growth and has been mindful not to expand too quickly. When QVC originally approached Tarte, Kelly had to turn them away because her new company was not yet ready to cope with such a large distribution. She eventually brought the brand to QVC in 2005, and since then distribution has increased tenfold.

Customer loyalty

As the company has grown Kelly has paid careful attention to her customers—their loyalty is a key part of her success. Tarte has an interactive website that allows direct communication between company and customers, and Kelly constantly refers to their feedback forms when developing a new product. Members of the staff blog about their daily lives, and Tarte's newsletters offer online exclusives, beauty tips, and product development news.

It's all a long way from the early days when Kelly struggled to find stores, telling one interviewer that if she had ever taken "no" for an answer she'd be out of business today.





Mei Xu

CEO of Blissliving Home and
Chesapeake Bay Candle

It is 1994 and we're in the basement of a suburban home in Annapolis, Maryland. Budding entrepreneur Mei Xu has turned the underground space into a laboratory of sorts, and there are paper towels and Campbell's soup cans (to be used for molds) all over the place. Having quit a job that neither inspired nor satisfied her, she has decided to be her own boss and is hard at work making candles. She's experimenting with color palettes and fragrances, and hits on a winning formula.

Fast forward to today, and her former basement operation has turned into a global enterprise that has twice landed a spot on the Inc. 500 list of fastest growing private companies, and enjoys annual sales of \$100 million. Her candle and home fragrance brand, Chesapeake Bay Candle, is now one of the largest candle and home fragrance suppliers in the world.

Industry revolution

The very first Chesapeake Bay Candle line was nothing short of a revolution in the industry. During her early experiments, Xu had forgotten to incorporate an ingredient that produces the characteristic seamless satin finish, and instead produced candles with a mottled finish that looked like snowflakes had fallen on them.

After hours of phone bashing, she managed to arrange appointments with buyers from most of the major retailers. Not only were they blown away by the texture of her candles, but also by the vibrant pop colors such as lime green and mango and the extraordinarily beautiful and innovative blend of fragrances. The first line of products was on shelves in 1995, in Nordstrom's, Bloomingdale's, and specialty stores, and the rest of the world soon followed. Within two years 3,000 boutiques had agreed to stock their candles.

Brand challenges

One of the major challenges facing Xu's company has been to preserve the brand from retailers who want to heavily discount its products, thereby making them unattractive to other retailers. So she works closely with them to balance their needs and hers, and has established partnerships with some of the country's major retailers including Target, Kohl's, and JCPenney.

Chesapeake Bay Candle has been profitable since its first year, and some of the profits are now being invested in her new interior lifestyle brand, Blissliving Home. It has already garnered three major design awards since its inception in 2007.

For a globally successful company, the world is not enough, and Xu continues to develop and innovate and explore new markets. Her excitement about the business is just as strong as it was in those early days in the basement, and her success is a testament to how far you can go with imagination, great ideas, and the passion to pursue them.

