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Intensive Conferences for Current & Aspiring Small Business Owners

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Cha'Kiva Felder

**Spoiled Diva** by [CL Felder](#) of Atlanta, launched in 2005 as a brand of individually hand-crafted wristlets, clutches and jewelry.

**'Ah ha' moment that led to launching the business:** I recall two times in one week, literally selling my handbag designs right off my arms. Both times I was approached in a store and the ladies told me they loved my bag and had to have it. So I emptied my belongings and stuffed everything into my pockets and bra and sold the

handbag.

**Ideal customer:** Fashion-forward and trendy ladies with an appreciation for the handmade. My target customer tends to shop more boutique and specialty shops looking for unique, handmade items.

**First customer:** My first wholesale order came from a boutique owner who saw an online video clip of us on a morning news show. She visited the website and placed an order.

**Measuring success:** Being my own boss — able to live and thrive off the earnings gained doing something I really love doing.

**Biggest struggle:** I have a really hard time letting people know when I need a helping hand. But what I realize is that everyone needs help at some point and there is nothing wrong with it. Instead, it means that you are progressing and experiencing increase which of course is good.

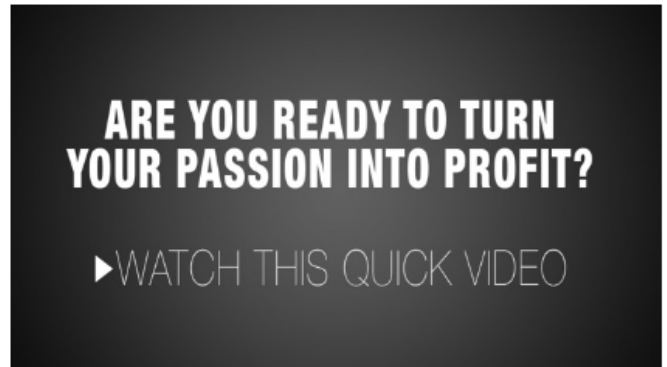
**Surprise!:** By the number of hours I actually put in. There is always something that needs to be done and right now, I am wearing each and every hat.

**Promoting Business:** I think I do pretty well with social media, namely Facebook. A big portion of sales (maybe more than half) comes from someone having seen my brand on Facebook.

**What you wish you would have known:** I knew running my business would demand most all of my time, but I had no idea I would have absolutely zero social life. Every waking second goes towards doing something for the business.

**What keeps you up at night (business wise!)?:** I often think about how I am going to pitch the brand to investors so that we can get worldwide distribution. It's not enough to sell only to the small boutiques. I want to go after the big department stores.

**Ever tempted to throw in the towel and just get a job?:** I've had always worked a full time job while building my brand. But being chained to a desk is just not a happy place for me. I recently lost my job — June 8, 2011 to be exact — so this is the first time I am actually working my business full-time and without a safety net. I'm excited to finally see just how far I can



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take it.

**Biggest goal:** I want to see Spoiled Diva in almost every boutique in the Atlanta area. This is my home base and the brand should be really well known in the area. I am setting up meetings with the owners and buyers of various boutiques in the areas where Spoiled Diva would be a good fit and showing the line in person.

**Pricing:** Do a little price comparisons between your product line and a close competitors product line.

**A few good tips:** Your brand message is very important and it should always be consistent. I design and produce a product so it is critical that the logo is always clearly displayed in the form of an inside label and hangtag. I worked in the apparel design industry prior to starting my line and I've learned that specs and measurements must also be consistent. For example, although I produce a variety of wristlet designs, I make sure that the dimensions are the same across all styles. Quality and workmanship are also super important because it doesn't matter how pretty a handbag is if I turn it over or look inside and see loose threads and messy stitching.

**Must-read resource:** There are many online sources that read and browse through on a daily basis, but the one that has been most helpful is Pantone.com. It provides me with color direction for my designs so that I am producing styles in the colors that my customer's will be looking for in the coming season.

**The absolute best part of owning my own business is:** setting my own hours without worrying about getting approval to take time off to go to a doctor's appointment.

**If I had to start all over again, I would have:** had a more defined plan of attack. I just sort of learned as I went along.

**I never imagined:** managing my time would be so difficult.

**If standing on a rooftop facing crowds of aspiring or struggling small business owners, I would shout:** "I will win!"

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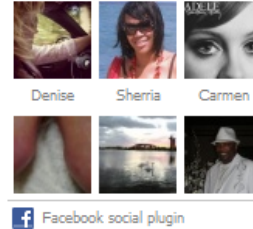
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