

Memories & Moments Travel, LLC

Laura Holcomb started Memories & Moments Travel, LLC in January of 2007 as a home-based business. She came to the business with a solid background in travel and tourism with both education and real world experience. She had worked for a one-person agency for six years, manning the office and filling in when the owner was away. But she wanted to work from home because of family issues and started looking for opportunities. Although her first business idea didn't pan out, her home-based travel agency has taken off for her.

When she started looking into her first business idea, she contacted the Ohio Small Business Development Center at the Lake County Economic Development Center and met with counselor Roy Bean. She went over the idea with him and he provided her with information to help her get started. He also put her in contact with then ITAC counselor David Simerly, as she was looking at starting a retail shop that imported Russian goods.

However, after doing a great deal of research, she decided the business wouldn't work for her. But the idea of owning her own business was still there in the back of her mind. Six years later, she started looking starting her home-based travel agency. She contacted Roy Bean again for help in this venture. He helped her every step of the way. He recommended E & O insurance, something she had not taken into consideration. He also suggested a Community Express loan to assist her with her financing needs further down the line. In addition, he helped her with information to put together a business plan.

Since marketing is extremely important to a start-up business, he discussed several marketing initiatives to assist her in getting the word out on her new business, including press releases, brochures and important local media contacts.

Her business has really taken off. She has become a certified Disney vacation planner and offers services to put together not only Disney trips, but also cruises, all-inclusive resort vacations and much more. She is averaging \$30,000 a month in sales and has had to add two part-time contractors to assist her with her busy workload. She is also currently looking into adding two additional part-time contractors to assist her, including one in southern Ohio to take her business state-wide. She is also looking into the possibility of adding an additional contractor in North Carolina, creating a multi-state enterprise, all run from her home. She is averaging over five booked trips per week.

Creating a home-based travel agency has given Laura control. "Not only can I earn more by not turning over part of my commission to a host agency, I have greater control over making sure my customers are taken care of," says Ms. Holcomb.

Laura suggests that any new entrepreneur visit their local Small Business Development Center before venturing forward with any business enterprise. "Come loaded with questions and don't worry about bringing too many," says Ms. Holcomb. Most importantly, she says, is "don't be afraid."