



Julie E. Swatek
Founder and President, ScrapYourTrip.com

Before scrapyourtrip.com Julie Swatek was a financial reporting and budgeting manager for Crossroads Hospitality Company. After the birth of her daughter she cut back to a part-time schedule. Ms. Swatek started scrapbooking when her daughter was born and had considered the idea of starting a scrapbooking business since then. While on vacation in Utah she had the idea to start a scrapbooking business that focused on travel and vacation. She knew that she would have to, "...do something different then carry a little bit of everything. Instead carry everything of a little bit." This combined with the fact that everyone travels and some people do it more than once a year, and year after year was the basis of Ms. Swatek's business idea. When her family returned home she began her research. She soon attended the ACCI (Association of Crafts & Creative Industries) show where she "was overwhelmed at the positive response" to her idea. She came home from the show full of ideas and catalogs. Ms. Swatek began her business as a part-time venture in a spare bedroom. At this point she was a "micropreneur". She soon found out that the company that she was working for was going through a merger and lost her job when she was five months pregnant with her son. Her part time venture immediately became full time. She spent most of the remaining time at her job with "Starting an Online Business for Dummies" trying to figure out how to open an e-commerce store. On September 3, 2002 her store was finished and she was open for business. Friday of the same week she received her first order and that was the beginning of scrapyourtrip.com.

The scope of scrapyourtrip.com is international and it depends on the internet for everything, it is a web-based business. The website is their catalog and all orders are placed via an online order form.

Scrapyourtrip.com is operated as a sole proprietorship. Some of the advantages of being the sole proprietor for Ms. Swatek are the fact that she doesn't have to answer to anyone above her and all of the rewards of the business are hers. These same reasons are listed on page 176 of our textbook under, "Why People Take the Entrepreneurial Challenge". The rewards of the business are not the only thing that fall solely on Ms. Swatek, the risks do as well. She is the sole person responsible for the choices that are made concerning her business. Another disadvantage comes from a capital standpoint; all she has access to financially is what she and her husband personally have access to. A business partner would help Ms. Swatek in certain aspects. For instance, a partner would help from a capital standpoint and having someone to share the risks with would take away some of the stress. However, a partner would also take away from the benefits to the point that it is not worth it for her.

The main challenge of owning a business for Ms. Swatek is all of the responsibility it entails. She has sixteen employees that she is responsible for. They all rely on her to be able to pay their bills and take care of their own families. Because of this she knows that her choices not only affect her but sixteen other people and their families as well. Another challenge for Ms. Swatek is that she has to "wear a lot of hats". For example she manages her sixteen employees, so as well as being the business owner she is also the human resource manager. The rewards of owning a business for Ms. Swatek far outweigh the challenges. In owning her business she gets to do exactly what she wants to do on a day to day basis. She gets rewarded on many levels, from making her customers happy to creating jobs for people. Ms. Swatek's greatest reward is the fact that she feels she is making a difference in the world. From a small business that started in the spare bedroom of her house she has created jobs for sixteen people and provides supplies to people all over the world to help them preserve their memories in a creative way.

Ms. Swatek's number one key to success has been to trust her instincts. She also credits her background in business to helping her make sound business decisions. Another very important key has been to put customer service first. "If you take care of your customers the profits will take care of themselves".

When asked if there is anything that she would do differently if she had the chance she said no.