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At Work With ... Ruby Weber, owner of Please & Thankyou

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Ruby Weber owner of Please & Thank You in Virginia Beach. (David B. Hollingsworth | The Virginian-Pilot)

Ruby Weber

Owner & founder of Please & Thankyou

Hometown: Bowie, Md.

Current residence: Virginia Beach

Age: 54



While we have a retail shop and produce gift baskets, we also do marketing. We produce promotional products for them, items with their logos on them. We spend a lot of our time trying to think of ideas on how to help our clients get appointments with their clients and, once they do, saying thank you for doing business with them.

One of our new incentives that we launched just this past year, while looking for a way to grow our company in a down -turning economy, is a wholesale division. We are selling to other retailers, pre-

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While in school, I developed my love for sales and marketing. I worked part time at Thom McCann shoes. At age 18, they made me a retail store manager. Back in 1974, I was making about \$40,000 a year.

When I calculated how much I was going to make with a college degree, I was not going to make that much after I got out of school. They put me on the fast track for sales and management growth. At the end of the day, I would make more money, so I went for the money. I worked through their system for several years.

Then I took a position with Applause, a company owned by Roy Disney, Walt Disney's brother. I started in Virginia Beach as a salesperson. I worked my way up to vice president of sales and marketing in a period of 14 years. It required me to move to California. I lived in California for about five years.

Then I accepted the position as president of a paper tableware manufacturing facility in Michigan. I ran that company and, after about five years there, I decided that at the age of 45, if I was ever going to start my own business it was definitely time.

I spent my entire life in sales saying "please give me an appointment" and "thank you for your business," and that's how the company came about.

What we try to do here is try to help other companies say the same thing. Everybody is concerned about giving good customer service and growing their business, and that requires creative methods of marketing their company. And that's what we do.

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made and fully completed gift baskets with the UPC codes on them. That's lower-margin business, but it is good business. My goal is to keep the 12 employees that we have here employed.

A lot people are looking for ways to make extra money, so I'm going to launch a series of classes. Sixty percent of the gift-basket companies in America are headquartered in the home. It is a good home-based business. For those that are interested in taking it to the next level, we will be offering the professional series. The classes will entail more information on how to start a small business and do it successfully.

Those people are going to start with their husband's business or a Realtor friend, so I don't see it affecting our business. Good competition only makes everyone better – it is just a fun business. It doesn't matter what business you're in, 80 percent of your business will come from 20 percent of your customers. That was true when I was in my 20 s and it is true today. I think competition is a good thing for everybody, there are so many clients out there to be had.

We love all businesses, but we deal a lot with major corporations. I still love making a sell. We still do the dance when we get a big order. We love retaining our customers.

As told to Pilot staff writer Tiana Stephenson.

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