

Q&A

The Mompreneur™



POSH MOM is based in the picturesque town of Stratford, Ontario, Canada. Owner and designer, Sherri Ground has always loved fashion. As a graduate of Ryerson University's School of Fashion, with years of experience as a retail buyer, Sherri applies her expertise in the retail industry to offer moms a fashionable alternative to the traditional teddy bear print and boring black diaper bag.

It's hard to imagine that only a few years ago, this stay-at-home-mom was jet setting from one major fashion centre to the other, buying the latest fashions for one of Canada's largest retailers. Today, Sherri has decided to cool her corporate jets to spend more time with her sons and having her own designer handbag business gives her the best of both worlds.

When Sherri was pregnant with her second son, she searched everywhere for a hip new diaper bag and when she came up empty handed, she decided to design her own. "I wanted to create something that was fun, fashionable and functional... AND something that would have a life after diapers."

Friends, family members and strangers on the street began placing their orders and now POSH MOM is debuting in fashionable boutiques everywhere. Unique fabric combinations, together with the highest quality construction and lots of pockets are the signature design features of every POSH MOM diaper bags.

WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU FOUNDED POSH MOM?

I come from a creative family so my love for sewing and designing things started as a little girl. I was always

sewing. I made costumes at the Stratford Festival Theatre before heading off to university to study Fashion Merchandising. After I graduated from Ryerson, I worked for many years as a buyer and also as a merchandise planner and product developer.

WHY DID YOU START POSH MOM?

When I discovered I was pregnant with our second child, I set out to find a new diaper bag; something that would be as stylish as a nice handbag but that would function properly as a diaper bag.

I shopped all the nice boutiques from Stratford to Toronto and on-line as well. I found lots of teddy bear prints but I couldn't bring myself to carry a bag that looked like it was made for my child rather than me. I also found a few very expensive bags. Most of them were much too big and heavy, they were made of plastic, had tiny change pads, were difficult to access with one hand, they didn't fit those large baby bottles and would never last beyond diaper days. There just weren't any reasonably priced and fashionable diaper bags out there.

Frustrated with what the market had to offer, I decided to make my own – one that looked like a designer handbag yet no one would ever know it was a diaper bag.

A few prototypes later, I had made that perfect bag. I realized I was onto something when people I didn't even know asked me to make them one of my diaper bags.

Before I knew it, my dream of having my own business was unfolding.

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR MAJOR SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES?

Real sales. Retailers are not just placing orders but they are replenishing their sales which has been very rewarding. I really love it when customers come back and buy a bag for a friend after having previously bought one for themselves. In just a year and a half since our launch at the 2005 Christmas One of a Kind Show, Posh Mom can be found in over 60 retail locations, mostly across Canada, with a few stores in the US, Australia and New Zealand.

Retailers have been very receptive to our diaper bags, especially Canadian retailers, because they're hand made right here in Canada. The "what a fabulous idea" and "oh, I love these bags" reactions are also very rewarding. I'm looking forward to breaking into the US market this year as well. Hopefully there are some moms there looking for a stylish diaper bag.

Since I started to sell my bags, I've also earned that they aren't just a diaper bag. They appeal to women of all ages. They're very multifunctional so women use them as a work tote, lap top bag, travel or gym bag, knitting bag, school bag, shopping tote and more. Women of all ages like the fact that Posh Mom bags are fun, fashionable and have lots of pockets that help keep them organized. They are made of fabric so they are really light weight and won't weigh you down before you even put your things inside.

The challenges of owning your own business are endless though, especially when you're a mom. My biggest challenge so far was getting ready for my first big show in only nine weeks. I put

together my line, marketing materials, booth display and all my product to sell while our baby was just seven weeks old.

It was nine weeks of 14-hour days but when I look back on it, that's what really got me started and I'm glad it happened.

Now my day-to-day challenges involve balancing my career with my family.

As other mompreneurs know, you have to be prepared to throw on a different hat depending on what comes your way. In the same moment you can be talking on the phone with a customer, holding your infant in one hand and dodging dinky cars on the floor.

WHAT IS YOUR PLAN FOR POSH MOM FIVE YEARS DOWN THE ROAD? WHAT ARE YOUR UPCOMING PROJECTS?

Five years from now, I would like to see an entire selection of Posh Mom accessories available in stores everywhere. My goal is to continue to offer women stylish accessories that are fashionable, functional, easy to use and unique. My customers are great ... they are always giving me ideas of what they are looking for so I rely on them for my inspiration and direction. They're looking for more styles of handbags, purses, wallets and travel sets so that's what I would like to offer. By the fall, you should see a pretty, new clutch and a travel system from Posh Mom.

They're all so cute, you'll never guess they're meant for diapers. **MP**



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