

BECOMING THE BOSS

KATHY CROWDER,
44, NEWPORT COAST, CA

When I was 25, I was laid off from a financial business-analyst job. It was tough, but I knew one thing for sure: I never wanted a “job” again. I wanted to start my own business. I started looking into everything from retail stores to Taco Bell franchises. Through my research, I discovered I wanted a business that was only open daytime hours during the week, since I knew I wanted to have children in the future and didn’t want to have to worry about the business on nights or weekends. As I found potential opportunities that fit my criteria, I discovered a roadblock:

“I didn’t want a ‘job’—I wanted my own business.”

Even though I had great credit, I didn’t have a lot of money. I applied for a Small Business Administration loan but was turned down due to lack of experience.

At that point, I persuaded the sellers of one franchise to finance the purchase of a Molly Maid home-cleaning business. I figured when I paid off the loan, I would be my own boss and make more money than I had working 45 hours at my previous job. Today, I own one of the largest Molly Maid franchises in the world. On the family front, after two failed adoptions, I used a surrogate to have my daughter, Savannah, who is a year old. Now, I only work two days a week so I have time to spend with her—not to mention the triplets I’m about to have via the same surrogate!



PRIORITIZING HER NEEDS

DONNA AUCOIN, 38, LAFAYETTE, LA

I began my career as a psychologist in 1998, working full-time for a mental-health agency. I married my husband, Preston, a year later, and we had our first child in 2002. Shortly after, with my increasing work and family demands, I began to feel ineffective at keeping everything together. At one point, I remember staring down at my son, Preston Neil, and wondering how adding one little baby could cause so much havoc in my

life! Looking for guidance, I met with a life coach who helped me create a mental picture of what I wanted: I wanted more time for my family and for myself. I wanted to attend parties at my son’s preschool without a major production. I wanted more time to create, exercise, paint my nails, and be with friends. She helped me recognize that I had the power to make changes.

“I wanted more time to create, exercise, paint my nails, and be with friends.”

I realized I’d have to open up a private psychological practice to have the flexibility I needed. Still, it was difficult to make the leap from a predictable paycheck to a fluctuating income. Furthermore, I was daunted by the expenses that were sure to go along with office overhead. So I began collecting inexpensive furniture from secondhand stores, hitting sales for computer equipment, and paring down personal expenses—I remember my husband once asking me at the grocery store if we could afford pickles!

After a few months, I found an office suite and invited another therapist to join me in the practice. Now, we have a waiting list! I work a flexible schedule three days a week—on those days I’ve enlisted the help of my sister-in-law to prepare and deliver three healthy and delicious meals to our family at a reasonable price—and a part-time in-home assistant helps provide child care for Preston Neil and my daughter, Allie. I’m living my dream!



CREATING A CAREER

LEAH JACOB, 31, MASON, OH

It was always my intention to create a life that allowed for a balance between my work and family. Even when I was 14 and realized I wanted to pursue the goal of being a classical cellist and teacher, I knew that I also wanted to make enough time for my future husband and kids. Right now, I have three children—including my daughter, Elena, born just this past November. As a cellist, I balance 30 private cello students, play in the local symphony, manage a wedding trio that plays on weekends and run a camp each summer called Cellissimo.

“My job is so much fun it feels like me-time!”

The best part? I do all this without spending more than \$80 a month on babysitting. I stay home during the day with my kids, and some of my teenage students babysit in the afternoon in exchange for private lessons. My job is so much fun it feels like me-time! My husband, Craig, enjoys spending solo time with the kids while I’m performing at weddings, and we still have plenty of time as a family to go to the park, go on vacation, and eat dinner together five or six nights a week! ►