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Kristie Tamsevicus, founder of WebMomz.com

Launching dreams



WebMomz founder writes book for stay-at-home entrepreneurs

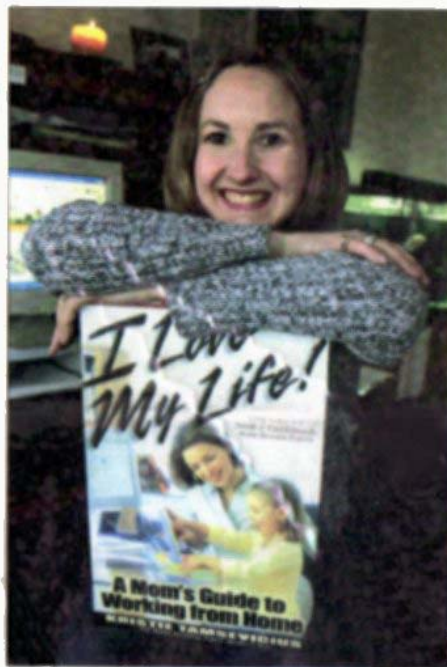
By Paul Pfeifer STAFF WRITER

GURNEE — After just a few moments talking with Kristie Tamsevicus, it's not difficult to see why so many would-be entrepreneurs flock to her for business advice. With a speaking and writing style that's as motivational as it is grounded in practical business sense, Tamsevicus has carved a niche into the world of stay-at-home moms who are now also seeking to start their own businesses on the Internet.

Already the founder of WebMomz.com — an Internet portal featuring forums and how-to business information for entrepreneurs — and Internet radio show host, Tamsevicus has recently added published author to her credentials, with the release of her book *I Love My Life! A Mom's Guide to Working from Home*.

"I think anyone can do it, but you have to have a lot of determination," Tamsevicus said of starting a business. "You have to have a lot of discipline, drive and a certain amount of vision."

The Tamsevicus family's Gurnee living room serves as mission control — it's where Kristie tackles the day-to-day operations of her business like the captain of a vessel, all the while with her "chief inspiration officers," 8-year-old daughter Nicole and 5-year-old son Brandon, hard at work with markers or catching the latest episode of *Sponge Bob Squarepants*.



Kristie Tamsevicus of Gurnee shows off her book *I Love My Life: A Mom's Guide to Working from Home*. She is the founder of WebMomz.com which features forums and how-to business information for entrepreneurs.

Joint venture

It's in the captain's chair where Tamsevicus oversees www.WebMomz.com, a joint venture with her childhood friend Michelle Floyd of Iowa, though Tamsevicus said she's exploring the idea of wireless Internet access. Read: catching up on some work while catching some rays outside. That and keeping tabs on the CIOs.

"It's more than making big money, which is all the hype," Tamsevicus said. "The real truth is that entrepreneurship is more about a lifestyle choice than making a lot of money. The best thing is just being able to be mom for your kids."

Tamsevicus's run in the entrepreneur world has come full circle, starting with a pledge five years ago in a hospital room to live her life differently to where she is now, helping new entrepreneurs delve into the world of self-employment with her new book and Website.

"I work with all newbies, and I love it because they're all so full of excitement," Tamsevicus said. "You can just see it's their first business. I love helping those types of people get their dreams launched."

But getting her own dream launched was the result of hard work and deep soul searching.

Five years ago as a worker in corporate marketing, Tamsevicus went into labor dangerously early with her son, 25 weeks into her pregnancy. Tamsevicus spent 12 weeks in the hospital, isolated from the outside world and her family.

Other than brief visits with her husband and daughter, Tamsevicius said the only contact she had was with a nurse who came daily to take blood samples.

"Until you've been in a hospital long-term, you have no idea what it's like," she said. "You are disconnected from the world."

"One day I was crying and I just felt like I didn't have the strength to go on. Even breathing was so much effort."

Turning point

The hospital chaplain entered the room and asked Tamsevicius if there was anything she could pray for to help her. Tamsevicius simply asked for *"feet to stand on."*

"During that prayer I made a promise to myself and to God that I would live my life differently and do all of those things I said I would do and I've never done," Tamsevicius said. *"That was the turning point of my life. Instead of letting life happen to me, I said, 'This is what I want and I'm going to do it.'"*

Her son was born a healthy boy, and after six weeks at home with the new addition, she headed back to work. After one rocky year back in the corporate world, Tamsevicius began to take classes and ingest anything to do with HTML, the language of Web design. She started slowly with a genealogy site on a popular free Web server.

By November 1998, Tamsevicius had built her business — Kristie's Custom Design — to the point where she left her corporate job to build Web sites full-time.

Soon, so many customers were flocking to her business (exploiting the "customer service is key" advantage of small businesses) she said she was nearly drowning in clients. Tamsevicius identified four major concepts — delegation, time management, creating systems (not continuously rethinking procedures) and building a passive income — to help manage her burgeoning business.

But even with the library of home business books that flank her work area, to her none of them seemed complete.

"After reading all these books, I thought there was still something missing." Tamsevicius said.

"Getting on the Web is key from expanding your business from local to global."

Tamsevicius's book which was originally titled *eBizMoms: The Ultimate Guide to Home Based Business* is written for "mom," the woman who looks after her children and keeps the household running smoothly, and seeks to start her own business from home.

'Momisms'

Among the "momisms" are practical pieces of advice, ranging from childproofing the home-office (a quick tip from Tamsevicius, locking up your check stamper, lest you find a child covered in check endorsement "war paint"), a Feng Shui arrangement of furniture and advice on how to get petroleum jelly out of a child's hair or ink stains out of the curtains.

The book touches on seemingly every aspect of starting and maintaining a family-friendly home business, from the opening steps of identifying a business, day-to-day operations, marketing, building a Web site and other general life strategies.

Getting her ideas onto the pages and then those pages onto bookstore shelves didn't happen without its share of headaches, though.

After spending 18 months writing the manuscript and submitting it to one of the nation's largest publishing houses, her work was rejected in May 2002. That tune changed a week later, when Tamsevicius's agent told the publisher she was consulting with Paul and Sarah Edwards, two well-known home business experts.

The manuscript then sat cold in the publishing house for nearly 10 months, and Tamsevicius knew the project was going nowhere. That's when Tamsevicius received a phone that she said changed her life.

On the other end of the telephone was Nancy Cleary, herself a work-at-home mom and head of the relatively small Wyatt-MacKenzie Publishing company of Deadwood, Ore.

Tamsevicius had a difficult decision to make about where to publish her book.

She consulted with friends in the business community, and despite ominous calls from the larger publisher claiming *"you're making a big mistake,"* Tamsevicius finally reached a decision.

"After thinking about it, I was crying," Tamsevicius said. *"I felt like my whole life was based on this one decision. But I thought wouldn't it be a cooler story about a woman who wants to make a difference for mom entrepreneurs and a little 'mom working at home' publisher coming together against all odds and doing something incredible? In my heart, I felt like it was the right thing to do."*

The next few months were filled with editing, designing the book and even reworking the title into something Tamsevicius hopes Oprah Winfrey could exclaim, *"I love that title."*

"We were just thinking about conversational titles," Tamsevicius said. *"How do people feel when they work at home? This is what I say to people every day ... I love my life. Since we've chosen that, we've had so much good feedback from moms that say that's how they feel or how they want to feel ... that they're in control of their lives and can live it their own way."*

All the work paid off last week when the book first appeared at the major Internet retailer Amazon.com. However, Tamsevicius is currently focusing on her Web site and speaking to various womens' business groups.

Tamsevicius said through her book and Web site, she hopes to be able to help a broader range of people succeed in business, but also in life.

"I want a place where people who are parents and entrepreneurs can come together and learn how to be successful and network," Tamsevicius said. *"It can get to be pretty lonely to be an entrepreneur in your living room."*

"If you find something you're passionate about, you can overcome any obstacle you come across," Tamsevicius said. *"I guess I'm the 'passion lady.' I want everybody to find what they're passionate about, because that's what gets you through everything."*