

Business Targets



Where There's a Need, There's a Business

Your Perfect Fit grew out of Debbie Stachowski's need for a comfortable, well-fitting bra – something most women don't realize exists.

By Erica L. Shames

“After our trip to Alabama, I was really on board. And we get to bring our animals [including pot belly pig Lily] to work, so that’s nice.”

■ **As many as 85 percent of all women** wear the incorrect bra size, according to industry estimates. Debbie Stachowski is a prime example.

“I started the business as a result of a pinched nerve in my neck,” Debbie recalls. “I went to a party and couldn’t stand the way I looked. I rearranged my bra straps and looked so much better. I went home and did the same thing to all my bra straps. In a month I couldn’t turn my neck.”

Debbie learned that the rearranged bra straps had placed so much pressure on her shoulders, she pinched a nerve. Her doctor recommended a professional bra fitting, something that was not available regionally.

Debbie happened to watch an “Oprah” episode in which bra fitter, Susan Nethero, founder of My Intimacy, was giving a presentation on how a bra should fit. “I Googled her Web site and found a list of private stores—the closest one was Philly. So I drove there and, for the first time, was fitted for a bra.”

What Debbie learned is that the bra band, not the shoulder straps, supports the weight of the breast. “I never knew that,” she marveled.

After Debbie took her mother and daughter, Marie Weaver, to a My Intimacy store in Florida, Debbie’s mother encouraged her to start a store in State College. She took some classes at the Small Business Development Center at Penn State, and did a business plan. As part of the learning process, Debbie found a bra fitting store in Birmingham, AL, Fitting Touch, whose owner, Janet Hall-Holcomb, was willing to train her. “Marie and I flew down there on Mother’s Day weekend. Janet was so busy! It was overwhelming.”

Debbie opened Your Perfect Fit August 2007, and chose Boalsburg over State College for the location. The store specializes in European bras, a product whose sizes, Debbie says, are more consistent than U.S. makers, resulting in a better fit. However, one challenge she faces is convincing customers they need to be fitted, and justifying the perceived extra cost. “Our prices are no more than Victoria Secret’s, but people don’t know that,” she observes.

The store inventory is augmented with gifts that include bamboo sleepwear, Hatley night shirts and K. Bell novelty socks. The store’s 7,000 customer base hails from nearby State College, and as far away as Scranton, Maryland, New Jersey, Florida, the UK and Arizona.

Daughter Marie Weaver joined the business after part-time salespeople proved to be less passionate about the business than Debbie. “Our accountant reminded us that no one cares about the business like we do,” said Debbie. “It came to the point where I had to quit my full-time job, and by 2008 I couldn’t do it all myself. Marie left her job to help.”

“At first I was hesitant,” recalls Marie, who worked as an assistant manager at the Nittany Lion Inn. “After our trip to Alabama, I was really on board. And we get to bring our animals [including pot belly pig Lily] to work, so that’s nice.”

In addition to the in-store sales, the business does a lot of mail order. “It’s funny,” notes Debbie. “There’s a handful of our clientele that live in this area; the majority travel here from someplace else. It’s a destination for them. That’s something we didn’t consider would happen in the beginning.” More information is at YourPerfectFit.com.

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