



Heather Diodati

Whimsies! By DDesign
Pointe Claire, Quebec
www.whimsies-online.com

It takes brains and sometimes it takes brawn to start a home-based business. Heather Diodati also relies on another part of her anatomy – her funny bone.

Diodati started Whimsies! By DDesign in the spring of 2001, armed with an idea, a sense of humour and \$5,000.

"The money went on a new computer and various office materials," she says. "And then I set to work. The funds for start-up came from pension money received from a job I held for 14 years doing payroll for a company."

After leaving the payroll job, Diodati wasn't sure what to do. She thought of packing all her worldly goods and her budgie, Emilio, into the car and heading for Vancouver. A barbecue chicken saved her from that decision.

"I was in the grocery store feeling sorry for myself and decided to buy a chicken to take home for dinner. There was only one left and I reached for it and so did another customer," she chuckles.

That chance meeting turned out to be firefighter Ron – now her husband-to-be. "Needless to say, I unpacked the car and stayed in Quebec," says Diodati. "And I got the chicken, too!"

So having stayed, she decided to look for another full-time job. She found one,

but all the while the idea of starting her own home-based business was in the back of her mind.

"I am an avid people watcher and always see the funny side of any situation," she says. "And I began drawing cartoons of many of the things I saw in everyday life."

That was the beginning for Whimsies! By DDesign and the Web site Whimsies! Online. Diodati draws her cartoons, scans the design into her computer art program and adds a personalization depending on what the customer is looking for. It could be World's Greatest Lawyer or Best Dad. The designs are printed on heavy parchment, mounted and shipped, ready for framing.

She also has a supplier who prints her designs on coffee

mugs, magnets and other collectibles. Diodati does the customer shipping herself.

But her two-pronged attack on small business didn't stop there. Diodati had an idea for a new product – her now trademarked computer Pet Virus. This is a small fuzzy critter that computer users can perch on top of their monitors to provide a bit of comic relief, as Diodati explains it. They are selling like hot cakes through her Web site www.whimsies-online.com

Approaching 50, Diodati says she will continue to do what she loves. "I have always loved creating art, whether it be fine arts, cartooning, fashion design or just cutting out paper dolls (oops that was when I was a bit younger!)," says this humorous entrepreneur.

Diodati believes it's never too late to follow your dream. "My advice to others is once you start, keep going," says Diodati. "Because once you stop – you have to start over."

She stresses that you also have to believe in your product. "Be excited and proud about your product or service," she says. "If you look at your product and get goose bumps, this is good!"

Diodati is still in that place where many start-up entrepreneurs find themselves. She is working from her home office and making her business leaps one small step at a time. Her overall sales, including the Pet Virus, for 2002 were up 47 per cent from her start-up year.

"It's looking good, considering we have the busy season around November for Christmas sales," says Diodati.

Oh yes, and did we mention, she also finds the time for ballroom dancing and creative writing?

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~ Heather Diodati

