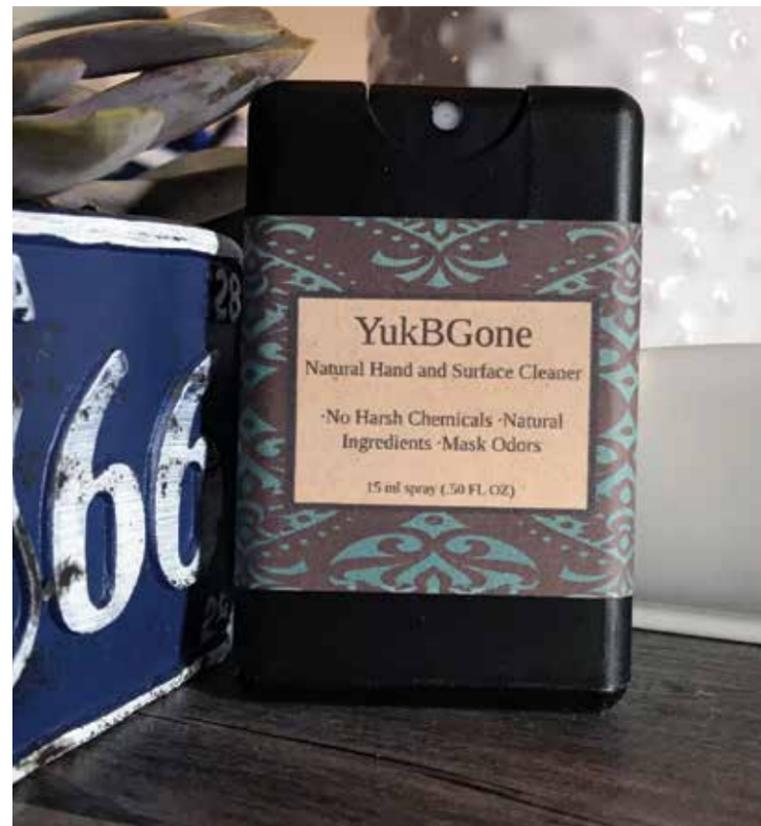


Jody Harris

Photography by Hyped Visuals



JODY HARRIS is a problem solver entrepreneur from Stillwater, Oklahoma. She is a successful product developer, as well as, an award-winning best-selling author. Her mindset to never give up and to keep going has been a pivotal force in overcoming obstacles and failures. When most people would have thrown in the towel and walked away, Jody has found a way to continue to push forward to make her dream a reality.



I was born and raised in Oklahoma

in a middle-income family with three siblings and am now the mother of three amazing grown children who, together, have three beautiful daughters of their own. My parents are both deceased, though I remember back in third grade asking my parents' permission to build a dollhouse. I didn't want a store-bought dollhouse...I wanted to design, create and make a dollhouse. From that day forward, I loved figuring things out: how to cut wood to create a masterpiece, how an engine worked and made things move, how the chemicals in a perm made hair curly (yes, I know I'm dating myself). These were all things I wanted answers too. Forty plus years later, my mind is still in a problem-solving mode with my love for building and creating strategies. Every day, I want to learn and create something that will make a difference in the world.

After traveling for business and pleasure for several years, I realized there was one thing that bothered me... YUCKY stuff...yucky restrooms, yucky shopping carts, yucky hands. Just think about everything we touch with our hands and everything we retouch. This can be a little frightening when you think about the money you touch, your cell phone, your keys, shaking someone's hand...the list goes on forever. My mind kicked into high gear thinking about the fact that you don't always have soap and water available. There had to be a solution to this on-the-go problem to get rid of the YUCK, and thus, Yukbgone was born.

After several attempts, I finally formulated Yukbgone, my natural hand and surface cleaner. The euphoria I felt was indescribable, though this quickly subsided when I began to think...now what? My background is in finance, you know the person that sits on the other side of the desk analyzing someone else's dreams while trying to make it work? Now, I had to figure out how to take my product to market...what does the end consumer want...what was my marketing strategy...how would I fund my project? The list seemed to grow with a lot of unknown variables, but my determination kept me going.

My first design was a four-ounce bottle with a white and green design. I remember ordering 2,000 bottles and 5,000 labels to get a better price. I know the math didn't add up, but I was preparing for the future orders. My mind was telling me that once I put my product on the market, it would sell out. After a couple of months, I began to realize that I did have very good friends who wanted to support me (thank goodness), but I wasn't meeting my sales projections. This was a heavy reality for me. I had invested my own funds, and now, I didn't have the return on the investment I was expecting. Now, WHAT was I going to do?

Anyone who knows me, along with my background of being a teenage mom and survivor of domestic violence, knows I don't give up. Yes, I had taken a blow, but it wasn't the end of the world, and I needed to regroup, reanalyze and move forward. So, back to the drawing board I went as an architect and carpenter of my business. I am very hands-on during the formulation, design and marketing of my product and this time, I came up with a two-ounce bottle with a cute leopard print on the label. I thought I had hit the jackpot. Two months after launching the two-ounce bottle,

I had sold half of my inventory, and I was already working on new label patterns. After eight months, however, I was witnessing a decline in sales. Everyone loved the solution, but they didn't love the new packaging.

Fortunately, my business model is structured to allow for flexibility. As I began to ask and search for the reason behind the decline, a friend suggested that I needed a smaller bottle. This was a pivotal time in my business because I had found two ways of how NOT to market my product, so I knew I couldn't give up. Two months later, I launched my third marketing package, which was a success and tripled sales from the previous two packages. Marketing YukBGone and figuring out how the consumer wants products presented has certainly been a challenge, as it took me three years to get it right. It's an inner struggle of trying to figure out how the consumer would like to see my product; however, in the end, determining and knowing the current trends have worked very well for my business.



With the successful packaging in place for YukBGone, momentum grew, and I knew it was time to take the next step, so I decided to attend and pitch my product at the Irving Shop Main Street America event. This was a life-changing event for my product, and me, as within just a few months, I was pitching YukBGone LIVE on HSN.

YukBGone began from my recognizing the need to resolve a problem for yucky things and my excitement to come up with a solution. The initial prototype for YukBGone, and other problems and inefficiencies I work to resolve, is usually an easy process for me, though I recognize it as a work in progress. Having gone from a simple prototype to the final YukBGone product (labeled as "genius," by a well-known chemist), and later watching it evolve on HSN has been my biggest achievement in business. YukBGone will continue as a manufacturer because I enjoy creating; however, the company continues to evolve and now encompasses the added roles of wholesaler, distributor and retailer. The journey of being an entrepreneur has played an amazing part in my life, and on October 12, 2018, I officially retired from my 9–5 job and am a full-time entrepreneur.

BEST ADVICE LEARNED AS AN ENTREPRENEUR

- 1 You are going to fail at some projects in your business, and it will be ok. Learn from these failures, don't stop and keep going.
- 2 You will gain more value from building relations, lead to more business more so than in simply asking people to buy your product.
- 3 If you have a day job, don't quit. You will need it to help fund your business. It took me five years to get to the point where I could retire from my 9–5 job.
- 4 Being an Entrepreneur can feel like you are on a roller coaster. There are times when there is no excitement, where you are stuck on the roller coaster that is going around and around. You have to prepare yourself mentally for this time and fill this void by making your own excitement. Looking back at how far you have come, what challenges you have overcome, and look at your vision board for motivation.
- 5 Figure out your gifts and talents, find your passion, and set your vision.
- 6 Remember your WHY for starting your business. Evaluate your business often to see if your business model meets your why.
- 7 Be a problem solver. What you don't know—learn, what you know—share, what you want—go get it. No excuses.

JODY
YukBGone.com