

Anatomy of the New Entrepreneur

Written on August 19, 2012 by [Sharon O'Day](#) in [Financial Independence, Life, Taking Control of Finances, Women and Money](#)
<http://sharonoday.com/anatomy-of-entrepreneur/>



Click on the link if you prefer to listen ...

[Anatomy of the New Entrepreneur](#)

Amy Wilkinson is an entrepreneurship scholar with endless credentials. She studies the leadership skills of entrepreneurs to understand what makes them tick ... and what makes them succeed. In a keynote speech given to the Federal Reserve Board earlier this year, Amy Wilkinson (who is also a Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School) said ***we need to “foster entrepreneurship in America” to help jumpstart the economy.***

She talked about the whiz-kid innovators who have come out of her alma mater, Stanford University, and who have peopled Silicon Valley for the past twenty years: Google’s Sergei Brin, Pierre Omidyar at Ebay, Jerry Yang at Yahoo and so many others. In her talk, Amy identified the six characteristics these “high-impact” entrepreneurs all share which allowed them to build their businesses to mega-millions in sales, hiring vast numbers of employees in the process.

America’s Real Concern

Yet during the Q&A session after her address, the topic shifted to how manufacturing, when it came back, would not look quite as it did before 2008. And the main question was what to do with ***all the people who lost their jobs and who still had many productive years left before them.***

Retraining with new skills is one option.

But, especially with the sluggish return of the economy and jobs, it's more likely that a large percentage of those people would find themselves starting up some kind of business. And in that case, as I see it, what would be most valuable would be to provide accessible and affordable training in the fundamentals of business, which none of us got in school.

The evidence that people are turning more and more to business start-ups already exists. So while the first thing you think when you think "entrepreneur" is a techno-20-year-old starting a business in his or her dorm room, Amy Wilkinson cited the statistic that the average age of someone starting a business today is 40.

And, to me that sounds about right. What I see all around me, in small offline and online startups, on forums, and at conferences and meet-ups, is *a deluge of people scurrying to get something started*. Whether to supplement an existing job, as a hedge against losing a job, as a replacement for a spouse's lost job or just as a way to feel at least a little bit of control over their lives, people are starting businesses. Whether they are natural entrepreneurs or not.

But Do They Have the Skills?

Many are jumping in feet first and could greatly benefit from some simple courses in basic strategy, accounting, marketing, hiring and government reporting. But with that sheer perseverance Americans are famous for, *even those who are short on skills are figuring things out the best they can*, inhaling every bit of information available on the internet.

I see all skill levels. I see everything from pie-in-the-sky to hardened realists. I see some that will likely never get anywhere ... usually because the product or service they chose to offer does not truly fulfill a need their potential customers would be willing to pay them for.

And every so often, I see an ember that's been nurtured and fanned for a while now ... and that suddenly starts to burn. And that's the case of Mari Ann Lisenbe and her MariGold Bars.

The New Entrepreneur

Mari Ann and I are part of a foursome that met for two years as an every-Friday-morning "Breakfast Mastermind Call." I knew Mari Ann had taken her IT background at Hewlett Packard and combined it with her passion for nutrition and healthy bodies. The result was a terrific fitness program that included a series of yoga-based exercises she had developed, an eating plan she had designed and motivational brain-training videos she had produced. All of it original. Unique. And effective.

In her mid-50s, Mari Ann was the poster child for how well all the pieces worked together, and she enthusiastically taught courses locally as she built out a beautiful website. Once launched online, she tested pricing. She tested different packages of services. Membership or one-time payment? More brain-trainings. Contacting local radio shows to get PR. Tapping into the Christian market. More and better videos. Online advertising, PPC and FaceBook ads. And, no

matter what she did, she couldn't get enough traction that would indicate she had a solid success on her hands.

Every stumble led to a new approach. Every failure lasted just long enough to get past the frustration and try something else.

And as she continued with her local classes and her steady base of customers, she kept hearing one thing: ***“Can you recommend a good gluten-free protein bar?” And she couldn't.***

The Golden Opportunity

I remember the day Mari Ann first said she was going to find the right ingredients, which none of the larger bar manufacturers were using. She was going to try to make her own bars. I heard about what kind of cows the whey had to come from. She researched and sourced ingredient by ingredient. She made sure her bars tasted sinfully delicious, while being perfectly healthy for you. And she started sharing with friends and customers.

As demand grew, her husband Steve joined in the effort and together they started teaching themselves about manufacturing and distribution. Contract kitchens were out because of potential gluten contamination. So they built their own facility, boned up on FDA product and packaging requirements and studied to get certified as food manufacturers.

Mari Ann and Steve are bootstrapping this business because ***they want to keep control over their own destiny.*** And in the absence of easy bank loans, they're using cloud funding through Kickstarter to purchase the next critical piece of production equipment. (Go ahead and check out their fun [Kickstarter video](#).)

They are now in full marketing mode and are contacting all of the influencers in the healthy foods category. The response they are getting ... plus all the people who are suddenly contacting them about investing against a piece of the action ... tells me ***this is going to be one successful start-up!***

Why? Because they found something that people were actually seeking ... without success. They went above and beyond in fulfilling people's expectations. They became experts in every aspect of the industry. They didn't cut corners. They never took no for an answer as they hit obstacle after obstacle. They had a clear strategy. They kept their costs to a minimum and used creativity in place of dollars wherever they could. Today they're in the catbird seat.

Mari Ann and Steve Lisenbe are ***doing their part to jumpstart the economy.***

Let us know in the Comments section below what service you're offering your potential clients and what makes it unique. And, if you'd like to be part of another successful start-up (in exchange for some yummy gluten-free protein bars with names like Chocolate Praline and Healthy Addiction), click over to their [MariGold Bar Kickstarter page](#) and make a pledge!

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Bio: [Sharon O'Day](#) lost everything at age 53: her home, her business, everything. But how could that be? She's an expert in global finance and marketing with an MBA from [the Wharton School](#). She has worked with governments, corporations, and individuals ... yes, she was the secret "weapon," if you will, behind many individuals in high places. Yet she did! Since then, with her finances completely turned around, Sharon has gone on to interview countless women. She's done extensive research to understand how that could have happened, especially with her strong knowledge of numbers and finance.

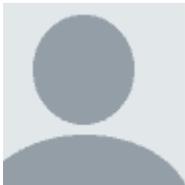
The surprising answers are shared in her posts, articles and an upcoming book. Today her mission is to show as many women as possible how to become financially free for the long term, through her coaching programs. She has developed a step-by-step plan to get past all the obstacles that keep women broke and scared ... and from reaching the financial peace of mind they so deserve ... if they're willing to do what it takes!

96 FLARES

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Tags: [Financial Independence](#), [Life](#), [Taking Control of Finances](#), [Women and Money](#)

- 57 comments



Join the discussion...

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[Gina Carr](#) • [3 years ago](#)

What inspiring stories - Mari Ann's and yours! Totally love your perspective. I have been wanting to try Kickstarter myself. You've just given me additional motivation! Thanks for doing your part to help the economy and encourage smart entrepreneurship!

○ [1](#)

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Gina Carr](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks for the kind words, Gina. I discovered Kickstarter when the son of a friend was launching a terrific product and fell in love with the concept. Not only do you get the funding you need to bring something to market ... but you also discover if you HAVE a market, based on whether people pledge or not. Not that it's a guarantee. But if they don't, you sure know you need to go back to the drawing board! And no one loses because there is no partial funding (the funds don't get collected from those who DID pledge if the target isn't reached). Brilliant concept!

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Marie Leslie • [3 years ago](#)

What a great story. I love it when people listen to what the world is asking for and jump in to fill a need. That is absolutely the all-American success story--innovation and imagination mixed with lots of hard work.

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Marie Leslie](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Yours is absolutely the definition of the all-American success story, Marie. Perfectly said! And from what I see and read, you're right on track too ... ;-)

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[Mandy Edwards](#) • [3 years ago](#)

What an inspiring story!! Thanks for sharing!

○ [1](#)

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Mandy Edwards](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks, Mandy, it really is!

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Alexandra McAllister • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks for sharing such an inspiring and motivating story, Sharon! Thanks for the link to Marigold Bar Kickstarter page as well.

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Alexandra McAllister](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Appreciate you stopping by, Alexandra! We all know people with a gluten intolerance ... so please be sure to share with any YOU know! ;-)

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[dennyhagel](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks for sharing this motivating and inspiring story! Much needed! And congrats to Mari ann!

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[MariAnnLisenbe](#) [dennyhagel](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks, Denny. We're not there yet, but one thing's for sure... we're not giving up!

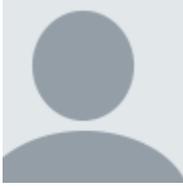
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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [dennyhagel](#) • [3 years ago](#)

We need as many good-news stories as we can get, Denny. And it's even better when it happens to friends!

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Ginger Pugliese • [3 years ago](#)

Once again a timely article, especially given the economy these days. Thanks also for the link to the Marigold Bar Kickstarter page :)

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Ginger Pugliese](#) • [3 years ago](#)

I just love watching smart, hard effort pay off, Ginger! And I think Kickstarter is such a great solution when small amounts are needed. They used to come from friends and family ... but world has changed.

o



[Diane Dolinsky-Pickar](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Sharon, a fantabulous post! I keep thinking when I read your stuff, that it simple can't get any better... and then the next week, you come out with a post that is even more superlative in every way. How inspiring!

o



[Lisa Carter](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks for sharing this post Sharon! What a great story. It inspires me to keep on trucking with my own business. Everyone these days seems to be looking for easy income and handouts. They don't want to do the hard work and due diligence necessary to be successful. It's all about finding what the demand is and providing for that need in the marketplace. There are always opportunities for those willing to take the chance. I've been working my own business since the manufacturing company I worked for closed the plant in 2007. It's not been easy, but it's been so rewarding and I looked at the closing of that plant as a new beginning for me. It was just a new chapter in my life.

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[Susan Critelli](#) • [3 years ago](#)

What a great article! Full of inspiration and dream stuff for those thinking about reinventing themselves, and practical info about using Kickstarter to get funding! I love it!

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Susan Critelli](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks, Susan! What's great about being an entrepreneur is that we CAN reinvent ourselves, as long as we learn lessons with each reiteration!

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[Susan Can Help Me](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks for sharing this very motivating story. I just love Mari Ann's passion and purpose! I am so glad that I had the pleasure of meeting both of you beautiful ladies in TX.

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Susan Can Help Me](#) • [3 years ago](#)

That's right, Susan, and Deb was with you as well! We've all traveled long paths since then, haven't we? Good ones, too!

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[AD VirtualAssistance](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Sharon, thank you so much for sharing your story and Mari Ann's with us. Very inspiring story and a lot of people with benefit from reading it. Thank you so much!

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [AD VirtualAssistance](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks, Anastasiya, for stopping by and glad you enjoyed hearing about Mari Ann's new venture!

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[Ruth Helena Bowers](#) • [3 years ago](#)

It's so nice to hear about the success of others, especially when there's so much bad news out there. I think the way we do business is definitely changing toward smaller, more personalized businesses.

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Ruth Helena Bowers](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Helena, I think technology is making it easier for more people to start up smaller, more personalized endeavors, as you say. This is a great solution during this time of uncertainty, when business owners who traditionally invest in new equipment and new workers are hesitant until they know which way taxes, etc., are going ...

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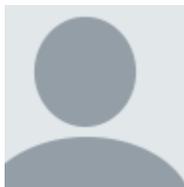
[Sondra](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Very inspiring Sharon. There's just something about an entrepreneur!!!!



[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Sondra](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Yes there is, Sondra. Something special!



Pat Moon • [3 years ago](#)

Sharon, thanks for sharing these success stories. The company I represent with my nutritional products was born as a result of a government study conducted from 1946 to 1958 on chronically fatigued people who were not responding to traditional medicine. The result of the study found when these people were given concentrated amounts of the high quality lipids and sterols (oils) from wheat, rice, & soy, they regained their health. The patients involved in the study benefited greatly. Unfortunately after the study, the formula was put on the shelf and nothing was done with it.. typical of many government studies. A man whose wife was helped during the study was able to acquire the rights to the formula. That was the foundation of Neo-Life, the mother company of GNLD. Neo-Life holds the rights to the formula which is still available in supplement form today. It was the first and only product of Neo-Life in 1958 when the company was founded. I am very proud to be an independent distributor for GNLD today. Our base line product is very unique and not available from any other company. Thanks for asking what is unique about the products I offer to my clients.



[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Pat Moon](#) • [3 years ago](#)

And doesn't it make it easier to market something when you know it's unique, it works, people have paid for it ... AND benefited from it? Be sure to hold all that information in your mind whenever you're marketing or selling it, Pat, because when you feel that differentiating positioning, your potential customers will feel it as well!

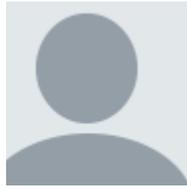
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Aloha Betty • [3 years ago](#)

I am so glad I stumbled upon this article. I am a 44 year old, single mother of 2 children. I have lived (away from my family) on the Big Island of Hawaii for the past 15 years and raising children alone while trying to provide for them can be quite tricky. 2 1/2 years ago I was part of a partnership that opened up a needed thrift store in my upcountry community. It was very successful but I found that a partnership is like a relationship, if you're both not in it for the same reasons, it just doesn't seem to work. SO, that being said, I set out to start my own business. I have a background in architecture and design and decided to follow my passion. Through the thrift store (and the fact that I live on an island) I found that reusing and repurposing furniture and household items was something that could work, and work well, in this economy. It seems that my hunch was right. With a leap of faith and not much money (at all) I started on my way. It took me a few months to gather a start up inventory then a few more months to "work my magic" on the pieces (all the while bartending weekend evenings while my kids were with their dad). I searched for a space to set up shop, secured that and within 10 days of doing so opened my doors (well, door). It has not been easy but I have found that what I do works. Most of my business has been from word of mouth. I have a public local business page on Facebook that I update daily and I advertise on Craigslist as well. For the first 6 months I had no signage but the public still found me. When you have a passion for what you do people seem to respond to that. I LOVE that I have created a business where I can be a mom, first and foremost. I am not a business woman in the least but I am figuring it out as I go along. What I do know is that I owe NOTHING on the business. I have no debt on this venture. I move forward with this business because I love what I do and I am doing it with right intention. You know that saying, "If you build it, they will come"? I have found this to be true. I work on a lot of faith, from the aspect of, doing the right thing and loving what I do and knowing that even though I'm not making millions I am making a difference and that I am making a life for my children and myself.....and that makes me one rich mama ;)

see more



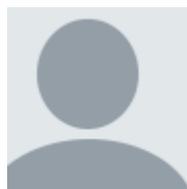
Aloha [Aloha Betty](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Kickstarter looks amazing! Thank you for the information :)



[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Aloha](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Betty, I love your story! Proves my point, doesn't it? And there's something magical about knowing you have no debt, you're caring for your loved ones, you have time to enjoy them ... and you have figured out how to earn money in a meaningful way that people are willing to pay you for. THAT's peace of mind! Hope you dropped your name and email in the box in the upper right-hand corner of this page so I can let you know when the next articles come out and we can stay in touch!



Aloha Betty [Sharon O'Day](#) • [3 years ago](#)

I will do that now :) I feel as though we as a population are heading back to "up holding community" by getting back to basics....with our own two hands! Why are we here if not to share experiences and walk together through this life.

▪



[MariAnnLisenbe Aloha Betty](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Aloha! I was inspired to read your story, Betty. So glad to see that you have followed your passion and are meeting with success, AND able to be there with your kids. I noticed that you said you live upcountry. I have family that lives in Niulii? are you near there?

o



Joseann • [3 years ago](#)

So that's simple. Find something people seek without success and that they are willing to pay for and that you are willing or able to deliver and then overdeliver and that's it. :-)
Problem is: I just never find anything that people seek without success and are willing to pay for that I could deliver. Same with mushrooms. I guess some people just get lucky... ;-)

▪



[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Joseann](#) • [3 years ago](#)

You're right, Joseann, sometimes people do stumble upon an opportunity that fits those parameters. You might call that luck. And others stay keenly aware at all times, actually seeking such opportunities and "making them happen." The truth remains that, any deviation from those parameters (say their target customers don't really want it, or they fail on the delivery in some way) means the

entrepreneur will struggle ... either until he or she gets it right ... or shuts down the effort. So keep your eyes open!

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[Susan Myers \(♡\)](#) • [3 years ago](#)

I love all your posts Sharon, I always learn so much from you. I have been making some needed changes in my business as I measure what it is my niche really wants and will pay for. It really is all about testing...

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Susan Myers \(♡\)](#) • [3 years ago](#)

That's great, Susan! So many of us think we know what our customers want yet are surprised that we're one or two clicks off ... which we can only discover by testing, surveying and implementing.

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[Solvita](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Great story Sharon, thanks for it. We need to jump start economy and you sharing this, helps in so many ways! Thanks again! :)

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Solvita](#) • [3 years ago](#)

I think we're all looking for what will jumpstart the economy, Solvita, and are all doing whatever we can ... including building our own businesses!

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[Anita Fiander](#) • [3 years ago](#)

So stands true we need to listen and deep dive into our niche...Excellent insight Sharon.

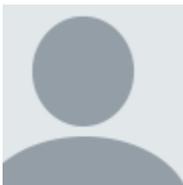
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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Anita Fiander](#) • [3 years ago](#)

You're right, Anita. "Deep diving" into our niche ... AND having a clear way of gauging whether we're following a viable path or chasing a pipe dream. It's so easy to buy into our own PR if we don't have good metrics and firm milestones in place as well!

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Karen Presecan • [3 years ago](#)

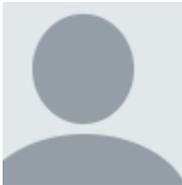
Wonderful story Sharon!



[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Karen Presecan](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks, Karen, glad you enjoyed it!

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Jamie • [3 years ago](#)

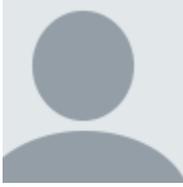
I love your stories. This is great, and man, I'd love to hear Amy speak, I'd love to learn more about this topic and her findings!



[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Jamie](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Jamie, Amy followed me on Twitter and I went to her website as I do with everyone before I follow them back. That's where I found her speech and all her other work. Here's the trail: @amymwilkinson and <http://www.amymwilkinson.com/> and <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/ar...> ... be my guest! ;-)

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Denise Sonnenberg • [3 years ago](#)

Sounds like a bar I'd like to taste. I've been trying various recipes of my own that are gluten free bars.

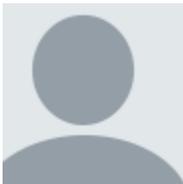
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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Denise Sonnenberg](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Denise, they are yummy! I'm getting my supply through the Kickstarter campaign (October, I believe). If that's not an option, what about friend-ing Mari Ann so you'll know when they'll be available by direct ship through her website?

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Tereza • [3 years ago](#)

Great story and so inspiring!

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Tereza](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thanks, Tereza, appreciate the visit!

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[Lyn Tuckwell](#) • [3 years ago](#)

It always amazes me how some of the simplest ideas are the best. What really impresses me here though is that she listened and heard Gluten Free Protein Bars.

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Lyn Tuckwell](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Sign of a good marketer, Lyn ... someone who truly listens and can gauge when the information has legs!

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[Sherie Venner](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Wow! Gluten free protein bars sound totally awesome! I love to hear about how people are taking their dreams and making them into a reality. All the best to Mari and Steve!

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[MariAnnLisenbe](#) [Sherie Venner](#) • [3 years ago](#)

Thank's Sherie!

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Sherie Venner](#) • [3 years ago](#)

What's also obvious, Sherie, is that they're really having fun with this business, as challenging as each step may be!

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[Martha Giffen](#) • [3 years ago](#)

What an inspiring story! America was built on this kind of attitude! If one thing doesn't work, turn around and to something else. And study success. I have been a student of success all my life and it really DOES pay off! Thanks for a great post!

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Martha Giffen](#) • [3 years ago](#)

You're very welcome, Martha. You're right that perseverance is one of the major components of success. That, and being willing to make mistakes by getting out of your comfort zone ... as long as you also learn from them! ;-)

o



Michele • [3 years ago](#)

Sharon, Thanks for this terrific article about the new world of the entrepreneur and your friend Mari and her husband Steve. It is such a great story and such a great product they are delivering. Can't wait to get on their kickstarter site and support them!

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[Sharon O'Day](#) Mod [Michele](#) • [3 years ago](#)

I do hope you are able to support them, Michele. Not only is the product unbelievable delicious, but they've shown terrific spirit and integrity all along!