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In Her Own Words: Hindi Zeidman's 'Ollie' more than carries its own weight



Photo submitted by Hindi Zeidman

Image Photo Selection by Samantha Galt-Bizwomen

Hindi Zeidman, founder of The Ollie World, San Bernadino, California

Being a single mom, a foster mom and an entrepreneur is challenging in the best of times and Covid and the Omnicron variant make Hindi Zeidman's life much tougher. She kept the standards for her foster baby carrier high in the face of major supply chain issues.

There is this societal expectation and pressure for women to “do it all”. The crazy part is that we do, in fact, do it all. The pandemic took that pressure to such an elevated and extreme pressure that I think we are still unaware of the depths of that impact. We all had to take on roles we never expected and we did so without help or support from a community around us.

As a single mom by choice running a company, there were so many days (and nights) when I lived in survival mode. I had no choice but to keep my head down and just keep going because there were literally no other options but to keep going. I was experiencing one of the most difficult times of my career at work and I felt stifled by the options to provide options and solutions by all that was happening with the pandemic.

Before starting **The Ollie World**, I worked as a clinical therapist (MSW), with a specialty in infant mental health. Prior to that, I worked for our local county to help set up three SART locations, which provided a multidisciplinary treatment approach to working with drug and trauma exposed little ones ages 0-5. It was working there at that position that I became a single foster parent to my foster-son, Oliver, who I created the Ollie for.

As I mentioned earlier, I actually lived through one of the most challenging times of my career during the pandemic. I made a decision to reject several orders of fabric because they failed my spec at a time when demand for our product was at an all time high. I care so much about the quality, integrity, and safety of every product we make, so the decision was an easy one. The result has been an extended time of being out of stock, as we make up for the failed fabric. As you can imagine, it is not easy to run a business without inventory, but there is no doubt in my mind that I did what was right.

I used this time to actually create an entirely new infrastructure that allows me to be in full control of every aspect of the manufacturing and production process. It has been challenging, as I essentially rebuilt my business from the ground up all over again. But, again, I know this was essential for me to create products that I stand behind and believe in. In my hardest of days over the almost 8 years of running this company, one thing has always kept me going and has served as my foundation for the decisions I made, and that is my belief in The Ollie and my goal to have a positive impact in the lives of little ones.

For this year, I am just so happy to have been able to rebuild this company and have Ollies back on the market. I also can't wait to launch the follow-up to the Ollie, which I have been working on for the past three years. After years of prototypes and testing, we are finally launching this new product and I am beyond anxious and excited. Over the next five years, my goal is to find more ways to be able to give back. We currently have the Ollie Full Circle, where we donate Ollies to foster-infants and a few pilot NICU programs, as well. I would love to be able to turn these into much larger programs, including even creating a special NICU Ollie to be able to donate to these programs.

Despite what can be portrayed on social media, walking the path of being a female entrepreneur is not easy. My Head of Operations is a male and 9.9 times out of 10 he is assumed to be my boss everywhere we go or any time we are meeting new people. I have been told I can't manage both being a mom and running a business and that I need to choose one. I have worked 7 days a week for most of my career. and, as tired as I am most days, I cannot imagine doing anything else with my life.

I will say that the best piece of advice I can give anyone is that you have to have a clear definition of your "why" and purpose of what you are doing. There will be days when that purpose is all you have to lean on, so make sure it is a strong foundation."