

Entrepreneurs worked to realize their dreams

The Business of Bliss: How to Profit From Doing What You Love
 By the editors of *Victoria* magazine and Janet Allon (Hearst Books, 222 pages, \$25)

By Christine Sparta
 USA TODAY

Entrepreneurs who daydream about converting a hobby into a career should consult *The Business of Bliss: How to Profit From Doing What You Love*.

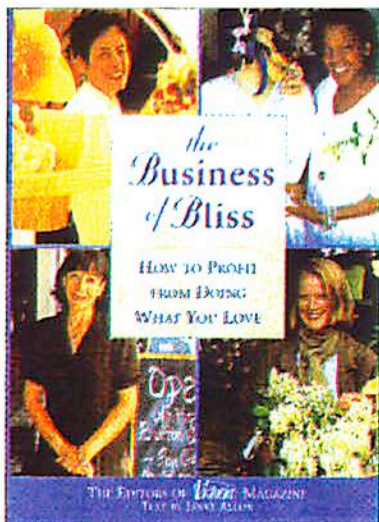
Bliss is by Janet Allon and the editors of *Victoria* magazine, which caters to the Martha Stewart set. Most of the 74 businesses profiled have appeared in the magazine. This is a pretty book filled with fetching photos of handmade vintage dresses, jewelry, flower arrangements, pillows and sweets — so much so, it looks more like a compilation of impressionist art than a book about business owners.

Don't turn to *Bliss* for the nitty-gritty on start-ups. But for \$25, it's an inexpensive way to get a glimpse into the entrepreneurial life without suffering any of the drawbacks.

Here are three close-ups of companies in *Bliss*:

► New York-based Pillowmaker is an on-line business that makes keepsake pillows out of material with sentimental value, such as college sweat-shirts or antique linens. Co-owner Kathe Williams charges \$35 to \$75 to make and ship the pillows and has sold about 2,000 so far. She handles the creative end, and her brother Keith takes care of the business side. "Our opposites have made an incredible team," she says.

The toughest part: self-promotion. "I'm really good at promoting other people and doing things for other people," she says. "But it's hard to just



go out and knock on somebody's door and put myself out there."

► Whispering Pines, a mail-order catalog out of Fairfield, Conn., also runs a Web site that sells "things for the cabin" — handcrafted canoe models, Adirondack chairs and pillows depicting the national parks. The owners, sisters Mickey Kelly and Susan Kelly Panian, wanted to stock the kind of items they remembered from childhood visits to trading posts near their Wisconsin summer cabin.

The toughest part: the catalog. "It's like putting out a major book four times a year," Panian says. Their catalog won the International ECHO Award from the Direct Marketing Association in 1994 for excellence in creativity and customer response.

They have about 300,000 people on their mailing list.

► Julie Van de Graaf moved The Pink Rose Pastry Shop, a confection store based in Philadelphia, to a more touristy, upscale neighborhood in 1985 — a smart move, as it turned out. It helped the business grow by one-third, she says.

Van de Graaf says that she tries to indicate in her mail-order catalog that her products convey a "sense of community and quality of life you're not going to find at Wal-Mart and Kmart."

The toughest part: Van de Graaf worked from home when she started out and remembers 18-hour pie-baking sessions at Thanksgiving.

She started her business with a \$12,000 loan from her father, which she repaid eight years later.

These days, Van de Graaf works five days a week, but it wasn't always this way.

"I take vacations. The first 12 years, no. I got to a point in my life where I have to make this work for me, too. I feel like I'm making up for lost time," she says.

She says that one of the wonderful things about being the boss is that she can decide where to put her energies — hire on a manager or pick up the slack herself.

"You design what you need," she says.

GenXers offer three maps to entrepreneurship

By Carol Memmott
 Special for USA TODAY

It's spring, and a bold young person's fancy must surely turn to . . . entrepreneurship.

The explosive growth of new small businesses by boomers' kids has spawned three books that promise twentysomethings everything they need to start a successful business.

The young authors, all entrepreneurs, share a disdain for boomers, who, they say, have sold their souls to Corporate America. Young entrepreneurs, all the authors agree, want more control of their lives and want to mold their own destinies. The most logical solution, they say, is start your own business.

In *Young Entrepreneur's Edge* (The Princeton Review, \$12, 247 pages), Jennifer Kushell, 26, gives a perky guide to business start-ups. She has tips on how to come up with a product or service, how to raise capital and how to write a successful business plan.

Youthful readers would be wise to heed her advice on grooming and appearance. Men: Monobrows are not cool. Women: Green nail polish can bring the wrong kind of attention. Older readers may laugh at her advice for the very young (or those who look very young) on how to appear older: Thirsty? Never order a "virgin" anything.

Still, her advice is sound. Among her 10 commandments: "Choose your area of interest carefully, taking into consideration your greatest talents, weaknesses and current resources; always under-promise and over-deliver."

Business writer Carolyn Brown's *Nobody's Business but Your Own* (Hyperion, \$14.95, 392 pages) offers ad-

vice that's solid and fine-tuned with a more seasoned connection to today's ever-changing world of commerce. She covers many of the same points mentioned in Kushell's book, but Brown, 33, offers a more detailed look at how to start a Web-based business and sound advice on personal finances, including investing for the future, franchising and developing business overseas. Entrepreneurs of all ages can benefit from Brown's savvy advice plus profiles of 30 young and successful entrepreneurs such as Hard Candy cosmetics queen Diane Mohajer.

While all three books claim they can help older entrepreneurs as well, *The Harvard Entrepreneurs Club Guide to Starting Your Own Business* (Wiley, \$14.95, 258 pages) by Poonam Sharma says right out front that its main goal is to help college students.

From *Harvard*: "Like a person who always dresses in style, a successful marketer must always be hip." Huh? Surely Sharma, Harvard class of 1999, and fellow members of The Harvard Entrepreneurs Club are not referring to Bill Gates, the richest Harvard dropout.

The Harvard book surpasses the other two in two key areas. The chapter on financing your venture is the best the three books have to offer. In addition, its framework for building a business plan is outlined in a detailed, hands-on, well-outlined chapter that packs the best information.

But young entrepreneurs can benefit from all three books. After all, say the Harvard kids, if you don't build your business wisely from the start, "you're in deep yogurt."

