

Diane Gardner - Great Events Ltd.

As a marketing director for an advertising agency and a mother of two, Diane Gardner felt she wasn't giving enough of herself to her family. So she decided to quit her job to become a full-time mom, but she still had the sense that her life was off-kilter. As it turned out, self-employment was the answer to finding the balance she was seeking.

Diane and her husband launched Great Events Ltd. in White Rock just four months ago. So far they've managed to sign a contract with HBC and Zellers to set up product demonstration booths to sell housewares in stores across Canada. They currently have eight locations in Vancouver and Winnipeg.

However, getting to where they are now was not so easy. Because Gardner had been a stay-at-home mom for so many years she needed to seek out funding in order to get the business up and running.

"We had good credit and lots of equity in our home, but because I wasn't working when I asked my credit union for money, they told us to go jump off a bridge unless we put the loan up against our home," says Gardner. "From there we approached the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) who then passed us along to Women's Enterprise Centre for a business loan. I felt like they were supportive, encouraging and believed in my dream."

With little knowledge about financing, Gardner found the whole experience of getting a business loan very educating. "The biggest lesson I learned was to make sure that you have a solid plan. In order to get a loan I had to write an extensive marketing plan, figure out my net worth and do cash flow projections to help me ensure the viability of my business. Now when I'm feeling uncertain about the business I pull out the plan to take a look at the projections and know that I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be."