

5 QUESTIONS FOR ...

a blogger



LINDA ROSIER/DAILY NEWS

Nicole Feliciano**AGE:** 38; based in Brooklyn**JOB:** Founder and editor, Momtrends blog (momtrends.blogspot.com)**TIME ON THE JOB:** 2 years**Why did you start blogging?**

I was working in fashion prior to having kids. I worked at Ralph Lauren for seven years, but the hours were grueling and unpredictable. I wanted something to do freelance. I found the parenting writing fit so easily with my life because I'm in it. I have two daughters, the younger one is 14 months and the oldest is almost 4. So either testing products, reading and research — it's all things I want to know about. So in 2007, I figured out software on Blogger and launched my own blog called Momtrends, and right now I have about 10,000 readers a month.

And your blog looks pretty successful — you have lots of advertisers and tons of reader comments. How did that happen?

I really wanted to find my voice, and I would say last summer, when the blog was up for about a year, I switched to having an editorial theme for the month. It worked out so well because I was

able to organize, pitch ideas easier, and it made more sense for content. When it got more continuity, readership picked up. When I hit the 5,000 reader mark, that's when I started putting up ads. So I dipped my toe in the water with doing Google ads, which are easy to pull in but not tremendously lucrative. And last fall I started asking some of the people I wrote about if they would buy banner ads. That's when the blog started to become more profitable. Now I have sponsors for newsletters and banner ads on the blog, and I have advertisers approaching me.

How do you find time to maintain your blog while being a mom?

The great thing about blogging as a parent is you can do it anytime, anywhere. I'll drop my oldest daughter off at preschool and I'll have the baby in the stroller and she'll fall asleep, and I'll go to a Starbucks and have my laptop with me, and while she takes a 45-minute or hour nap, I'll bang out a

post and answer e-mails.

Any tricks to keeping your kids occupied while you're working and they're not napping?

I always have a stack of stickers or paper nearby, so if I have to take a phone call at the last minute I have a secret drawer that I go into with my stash. I'll give the kids the stickers and paper and let them go wild. I just worry about the mess when I'm off the phone. For the older one, I'll turn on the sink and put three different bowls in there with food coloring in each bowl and leave a slow stream of water going, and that buys about 20 minutes.

How do your kids inspire what you blog about?

I'm not like Kathie Lee Gifford — I don't mention every bowel movement that my kids have. But I do want to let other moms know that I'm in the same situations they are. I've had vomit in my hair, picky eaters. I've had the hunt for the perfect soap that doesn't irritate my kids' skin, that's also good for the environment, that also gets stains out.

5 QUESTIONS FOR ...
an online merchant**Why did you launch your own company?**

I was unexpectedly laid off from my software marketing job when my daughter, Jillian, was 10 weeks old. I was devastated because I am the worker bee of all worker bees. Then, like a lot of mothers faced with a closet full of barely used infant clothes, I started selling on eBay. eBay charged me a fee whether I sold them or not. I thought, "I know about writing for Web sites. Why don't I do this myself?"

How did the business grow?

I began with a small inventory of baby clothes in the basement of my ranch-style home. Now we stock 25,000 items of clothing, gifts and toys and ship between 300 and 400 orders per week. Luckily, my husband is an elec-

trician and built me lots of shelves. We've gone from \$6,000 annual sales to \$300,000.

Any tips for wanna-be online entrepreneurs?

You will never be successful if you don't hire an expensive-but-worth-it search engine optimizer. Someone who knows the science of setting up your home page with the key words that get traffic. If a customer googles the words "baby clothes," my site appears in the top 10.

And mistakes that they can learn from?

In the early days, I'd get an order from a place like Nigeria for 100 of one particular item. Instead of thinking, "that's not legitimate," I'd get so excited, I'd send them off. Of course it wound up that the credit card was stolen and I was liable for something like \$500. Now I trust my instincts and haven't had a chargeback in a year.

How do you juggle your job with motherhood?

I couldn't go back to the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. corporate world. I love taking my daughter to the bus every day and I'm her class mother. But it has its stresses. There is a fine line between being at work and being at home. After Jillian's gone to bed at 8 p.m., I'll often go down to the basement and work until 1 a.m.

Donna Bliss**AGE:** 47, of Nesconset, L.I.**JOB:** Founder of online baby clothing store MyMiracleBaby.com**TIME ON THE JOB:** 8 yearsHOW
TO BE A
BOSS-
MAMMA

The key positive of being a "Mompreneur" is flexibility, according to New York WOR 710 radio commentator Liz Hamburg, founder of Upstart Ventures. The "serial entrepreneur" has launched products and companies in communications, technology, entertainment and media.

She recommends the career path for any parent looking to make their own hours, plan their own vacation time and take off whenever they need to.

1 Look into recruitment agencies that offer flexible time and/or job sharing, such as www.momcorps.com.

2 Follow your passion: If you are a great baker, start selling your baked goods in town. If you design clothing, do hair, knit beautiful sweaters, think about turning your passion into a new business. Start slowly — sell to neighbors, friends at local craft fairs, school events, etc.

3 Find a partner: Join forces with other women looking to start something new. Ideally, find someone with complementary skills. If you are a great marketer, find someone with a financial background.

4 Network: Look into local women's networking groups and online groups such as www.makeamillion.org.

5 Get help creating a plan: Local agencies can often provide free help. www.SCORE.org (part of the SBA — a group of retired executives) provides mentors and helpful advice. Check with your local university — sometimes they have business students who can help.

6 License your idea: If you have a great idea, but don't know how to create a business around it, there are groups like www.mominventors.com that license ideas and then take over manufacturing and marketing.

7 Sell on e-Bay: In 2007, New Yorkers alone sold 12,621,651 items for a total of \$1,045,503,913.