



## CASE STUDY: Mom's Originals

### A salty-sweet success story



Figure 1: Taran & Mom (Jody) at the Daytime Emmy Awards.

Some people find their fame and fortune in gold, some on the silver screen, but Taran Hensley found it in her Mom's pretzels. The timing couldn't have been better ... or worse. In 2007 she had been downsized and needed a job, but launching a company in 2008 was anything but easy; the economy lost 2.6 million jobs<sup>1</sup> and the market fell 33.8% making it one of the worst years for business in more than a century.<sup>2</sup> However, Taran knew the world would buy

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#### Mom's Original's on Go Daddy Support.

“He listened to me, understood what I needed then took the time to educate me.”

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her gourmet treats. “I was looking for something to do, something that would make me happy, and something that I could control a bit more in regards to the economy and being let go.” What she did not know was how to build a company on the Web so she made that call to Go Daddy. Now, at the four year mark when almost half of small startups fail<sup>3</sup> -- the company is a success with ever-growing revenues and Taran Hensley actually made it to the Emmys. Well, not for her pretty face – it was because of her Mom's pretzels, a lot of hard work, and a surprising amount of support from some people at Go Daddy, who are sometimes seen with chocolate on their lips and pretzel crumbs on their desks.

### When you can't get a job, make your own

It all began some years earlier when Taran entered the world of corporate marketing seeking a career and a steady paycheck. Well-educated with a degree in communications, she had ideas and she expressed them. An entrenched, hidebound corporate culture stifled her enthusiasm and stepped on her voice. By 2007 she had become frustrated and by year's end she had been downsized.

#### At a Glance

**Business:** Mom's Originals

**Product:** Gourmet Pretzels and Treats

**Founded:** 2008

**Units shipped (2011):** 55,000+

**Awards:** 2011 AgriMissouri Member of the Year

**Go Daddy Helped Us:** Take our business from the local fair to the Emmy Awards — and make our pretzels a hit at a major league baseball stadium.

**Results:** Within two weeks, helped launch Mom's Original's website to secure sell their products online and automatically generate shipping orders.



Figure 2: Mom's Originals are gourmet pretzel rods covered in chocolate, caramel and nuts..

Mom, Jody Hensley, had her own problem. For years she had been making unusual – and unusually good – gourmet pretzels. Her creation was a new take on a 1,400 year-old snack created when monks formed scraps of dough into the shape of a child's arms in prayer. The Pretiola (Latin for little reward) was given to children who had memorized Bible verses and prayers.<sup>4</sup> In a rich variation, Mom started with a straight pretzel rod then hand-wrapped a layer of soft caramel around it and dipped it in milk or dark chocolate. To finish it off she rolled it in finely chopped pecans or walnuts or simply drizzled it with an artistic thread of white chocolate.

The eye-catching treat became a salty-sweet success at local fairs where she would sell hundreds. As Taran explained; "People were coming to the craft fairs the past few years just to buy her pretzels!" But, when often told to go into business she realized she didn't know how to build a company, let alone handle the marketing. With Taran needing a job and a product to market and Mom needing someone to build a company while she built the pretzels, the two shook hands.

And so it was over the kitchen table that Mom's Originals of St. Louis, Missouri was formed with Taran as president and her mother, Jody, as ... well, "Mom".

## From the kitchen table at home to a company on the Web

Wanting to sell through food service distributors, retailers as well as through online sales, she realized they would need to move production from their home to state-certifiable commercial facilities. Additionally, since they did not want a store front operation with customers walking in, Taran began to wonder how to get the whole company online; a crucial step also because not having a web site is one of the seven reasons businesses fail.<sup>5</sup> "We had to be able to tell our story, to sell our product – with secure transactions – and manage it all." She looked into a local company that offered various services but they were limited and she worried whether the company would be around long.

In addition, the prices were "... just not there for a small growing business, especially a startup." An avid football fan, Taran remembered seeing Go Daddy Super Bowl commercials and picked up the phone.

## The one call that started it all

"I had my questions lined up, called Go Daddy and ended up speaking with a support person. He listened to me, understood what I needed then took the time to educate me and in a non-belittling way. He was very kind and ... well ... what seemed so daunting before the call became very easy." Apparently so. In the first hour the company had a domain name; in the first day it had splash page; and within two weeks it had a website with product photographs, a shopping cart that enabled secure



Figure 3: Today, MomsOriginals.com makes customizing an order easy..

transactions and the ability to automatically generate shipping orders. “He gave me his contact information so that whenever I needed to add or change something I could call someone who already knew my story; which is unlike most customer service experiences where if you get disconnected you never reach the same person again. With Go Daddy I had a friend I could count on.”

## As Mom’s grew, Go Daddy adjusted

But it didn’t end there. The young woman who had been scolded for sticking her neck out in corporate marketing did so again but this time in her new venture; she made a quantitative leap straight to the top by asking St. Louis Busch Stadium to try Mom’s pretzels. They liked them and Cardinals’ fans became Mom’s fans and have been pairing the sultry treats with their game beer ever since.

Thus, as she predicted, the company began to grow and, as it did, its needs expanded too. With Mom’s creativity in the kitchen and Taran’s creativity in the market, the two began expanding the product line and adding accounts. In some cases it was the addition of a new treat, in other cases it was the addition of new options to customize the order process. All of this meant more changes to the website so Taran used that phone number and her growing list of friends at Go Daddy to add more services resulting in an ever-improving customer buying experience.

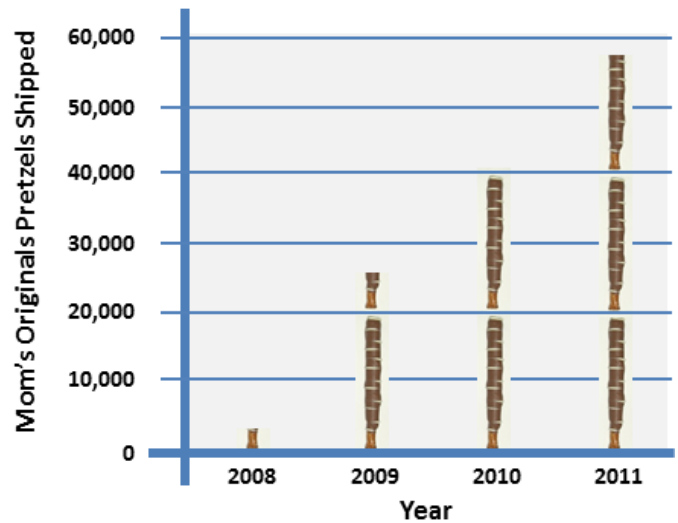


Figure 4: Shipments of Mom’s Originals grows every year.

Today, the site that began with the original Gourmet Pretzel Rods now includes Gourmet Pretzel Minis, Gourmet Pretzel Petites, Mom’s Mix, gift boxes of varying sizes and contents and a choice of distinctive packaging. It also offers the choice of ordering with or without nuts and even the ability to customize the colors drizzled on the chocolate coating for a patriotic look, to advertise whether you just had a boy or girl, or simply adorned with pink in support of (and to raise funds for) breast cancer awareness. And, to wrap it all up (literally) there is a choice of several hand-died satin ribbons all designed to – as the now successful company president says – “Impress from first-glimpse to last bite.”



Figure 5: Mom’s Originals gives regularly to the USO, tornado victims, and area food banks.

Not stopping there, Taran explains she is working with Go Daddy to create a “... whole new portion to our website where wholesalers can log in.” Combined with the projected growth of smartphone use of 194% by 2015<sup>6</sup>, it also means that wholesalers will be able to log in from anywhere and place or check on orders. The list

of features on Mom’s Originals’ website, and the services asked of Go Daddy, continue to grow and Taran doesn’t need to look at her smartphone to find that number; she knows it by heart

## Pretzels on the Red Carpet & an enduring partnership with Go Daddy

Mom's Originals' ended their first year (2008) by landing the Busch Stadium account and shipped some 3,500 pretzels in all. By 2010 their gourmet treats made the red carpet at the Emmy Awards and shipments hit 40,000. In 2012, after closing the previous year at near 60,000 pretzels shipped, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon gave the company an award for outstanding marketing, branding, commitment to community and overall excellence. Taran and her Mom also give regularly to the USO, tornado victims and area food banks. Now, after four years in business, Taran enjoys the sweet (and salty) taste of success, hard earned and well-deserved...and explains that "One of the reasons we continue to grow is that Go Daddy services let us focus on the pretzels and not worry about the website."

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1 "U.S. lost 2.6 million jobs in 2008" by Louis Uchitelle, New York Times, 9 January 2009: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/09/business/worldbusiness/09iht-jobs.4.19232394.html>

2 "2008 by the numbers" by Mark Hulbert, MarketWatch, 31 December 2008: [http://articles.marketwatch.com/2008-12-31/research/30779215\\_1\\_dow-gains-stock-market-dow-jones-industrial-average](http://articles.marketwatch.com/2008-12-31/research/30779215_1_dow-gains-stock-market-dow-jones-industrial-average)

3 Small Business Success/Failure Rates, by Barry Ritholtz, 4 January 2012: <http://www.ritholtz.com/blog/2012/01/small-business-successfailure-rates/>

4 "History of the Pretzel", FoodWorks-International: [http://www.foodworks-intl.com/history\\_of\\_the\\_pretzel.htm](http://www.foodworks-intl.com/history_of_the_pretzel.htm)

5 "The Seven Pitfalls of Business Failures and How to Avoid Them" by Patricia Schaefer, 2011, BusinessKnowhow.com: <http://www.businessknowhow.com/startup/business-failure.htm>

6 "Projected Global Device Growth, 2012 to 2015", InfographicsArchive, data from Cisco: <http://www.infographicsarchive.com/tech-and-gadgets/global-internet-traffic-expected-to-quadruple-by-2015/>