

## **Women Are Sneaky:**

### **Behind every successful business there is a good woman**

Anyone who has been around for awhile knows that women are sneaky. To give you an example, my wife wanted the garage cleaned out. It was full of the flea-market merchandise I had tucked into every nook and cranny after I discontinued that venture. She suggested that we could build a Web site to sell this stuff on the World Wide Web.

Back in 1998, this was a daring adventure. Very few people had web sites – we're talking the big boys. Some department stores had bridal registries online, a few of the Fortune 500s were starting to go online, but the average Joe was just getting used to having a computer in the house.

Before she started to work her magic and design a web site, she asked me a bunch of really stupid questions like: "How are you going to ship this stuff?" "Return policies?" "Will you have any minimum order?" And there were a lot of other questions that really didn't make a lot of sense at the time. After that was settled, she announced, "You ought to buy a digital camera to take pictures of each item." So I did – finding one that stored the images on floppy discs.

One by one, I'd bring the saleable objects into the house, place them on the carpet or couch. Then we'd take pictures of them, price them, and put the photos on the web pages by categories. Now to say I had the garage full, was an understatement. I had also rented a 10' x 30' mini-warehouse space to hold my flea market tables and tents and miscellaneous junk; so as we took pictures, items were moved out of the garage and into the warehouse.

Now, all this took place in the winter of 1998-1999, so I didn't play much golf because of the weather. On January 19, 1999, I was standing in line with a friend of mine whom I had talked into getting on the WWW for his business. We were there to register our domain names. While there, my friend asked me, "What are you going to call yours?"

"I don't know. How about you?" I asked.

“Balloons and clowns will work for me,” he replied.

“Well, I have a couple of ideas for mine but I don’t think they are appropriate.”

“Hell, all you’ve got is a bunch of cheap junk.”

And that was the beginning of [www.cheapjunk.com](http://www.cheapjunk.com).

So, for \$200 I got my business name registered and an ISP to host my Web site. Since my wife was far thinking and knew a little bit about computers and the Internet, she went ahead and had the web address put on all the search engines she could find at the time. After 3 or 4 days, I got an email with an order – someone in California wanted a dozen pair of sunglasses. I took time off from my busy golfing schedule, wrapped the package, and took it to the UPS distribution center. And, do you know, 2-3 days later I got another order. Then, another order. This went on for a few weeks and I was really getting tired of going to UPS and the post office to mail packages – and it was about time to start playing golf again.

About that time, I found out about a place called WholesaleCentral.com which had a free magazine called the WebWholesaler. I sent a letter on company letterhead to get my free subscription to this new magazine. Since I used the letterhead, somebody from Sumner Communications took time to visit my website and called and invited me to advertise on their website. I asked the price of the ad and slowly recovered from the shock. Only \$199 for 6 months! That sounded high, but I had saved up a couple hundred bucks from selling all that junk from the garage and went for it.

I don’t know how long WholesaleCentral.com had been online at that time, but when they started their auctions, I had lot number 40, which means it was probably the first day of their auction.

Four days after I placed my ad, I stopped playing golf. For some reason or another my ad was working and I started taking more frequent trips to the UPS and the post office. All this sudden success caused major problems for a struggling new business. Number 1, I couldn’t get a MasterCard Visa merchant’s account. For some reason or

other, banks out-sourced this service and since I was an Internet business, they had little faith in my success. Now, you must remember, banks didn't believe in the Internet. They did not have web sites and would have nothing to do with it.

Credit card companies charged outrageous fees and made you pay through the nose because they thought this would create major losses from fraud and, like the banks, didn't believe in the Internet, either. Believe it or not, it took several months to get a merchant's account with Master Card/Visa.

Number 2, was the phone company. Since I had a business phone, I was entitled to a listing in the phone book.

“What's the name of your company, sir?”

“cheapjunk.com”

“I'm sorry, we can't use punctuation in the phone book.”

“What???”

“If you want to use punctuation in the white pages it's an extra \$200.”

So my first listing was “**cheapjunkdotcom**”. I guess the phone company didn't have much faith in the Internet either. A couple of years later, that was changed. All this time, my customers were sending me money orders and certified checks and my trips to UPS were becoming more frequent with more packages. Got to know the guy at the service counter real well and he suggested I open up an account. It only cost a dollar a day to have the truck come by and pick up the packages. So I asked him to send a rep over and I started my relationship with UPS.

During all this time, I moved from my garage and 300 square foot warehouse to a 400 square foot warehouse that had inadequate heating, lighting, and air conditioning. And after a couple more months I had a total of 800 sq. feet. Sometime during this period, I started my relationship with the three largest knife wholesalers in the country.

After spending about a year in that cold warehouse I moved into a 3,000 square foot one that had a real heating/ac unit in it. So, I was warm during the winter and cool during the summer. With the help of WholesaleCentral.com , my sales continued to grow and I had to hire my first employee. Mornings were filled packing orders, collecting money, getting everything ready for UPS. Afternoons we had time to watch *People's Court* – but that didn't last too long. After 6 months in the 3,000 sq. ft. warehouse, we added another 3,000 sq. ft. Everything in the warehouse was laid out on pallets and every pallet had 5 or 6 different products on it. Pretty soon, it was taking longer and longer to pull orders – the more space we had, the more different products we had, the harder it was for me to find specific items. Sometimes it took over five minutes just to find an item.

That's when my wife jumped in again – “You need a location code.”

“A what??” I asked.

“A location code. Put that in front of the product number and it will tell you where it is located in the warehouse.”

That sounded pretty good to me.

So, we started numbering the pallets. When we ran out of space for the pallets, I started buying steel shelving, which meant I had room for 5 -10 times as many products in the same amount of space.

Well, it's been 6 years and we're still continuing to grow. The 12,000 sq. foot warehouse that I now own has over 200 sets of those steel shelves filled top to bottom. I'm spending a small fortune on advertising and going to wholesale shows and auctions trying to keep the warehouse filled with products. Since I have a nice warehouse now, and a staff of 5 employees, I have started to tap into a market I didn't even think about before. It is called the local area. Customers can now come in and select their own items saving us both the packing and shipping.

So, in conclusion, let's review what I said.

I didn't design the web site. I didn't name the place. Most of my business was coming from another website, WholesaleCentral.com. And, in picking the name "cheapjunk" I didn't realize that I had tapped into 3 key words used frequently in searching the Internet: cheap, junk, and wholesale.

I have been called a genius by several experts involved in e-commerce, but do you think I tell them about the good woman? No way. I like being called a genius.