

GumDrops Wet Weather Boutique



I am so proud of the fact that I am providing employment in my community and I can succeed as big as I want to dream.

Sometimes the best ideas come in the middle of the night. That's what happened for Shanda Jerret, owner of GumDrops Wet Weather Boutique.

It was January of 2007, and Shanda already knew she wanted to start her own business. She was three weeks into a self-employment program, developing a plan to start an interior design company. But something had been ticking away in the back of her mind. She'd bought a pair of playful pink and black gumboots to make it through Vancouver's soggy winter, and people were constantly asking her where she got them, and if she knew where to get more. Suddenly she realized she had a market literally asking to be served. She sat straight up in bed, smacked her husband in the arm and said, "I'm opening a rainwear boutique!" Nine months later, after jumping through "hoops and loops" to secure financing and a retail location,

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GumDrops opened on October 1, 2007.

Opening a retail store with no retail experience – especially one with such a seasonal focus – was no small challenge. Two weeks after opening her doors, Shanda sold out her inventory, then had to wait a month to be fully restocked. In summer 2008, her first summer season, she hugely overestimated the amount of inventory she'd need, and had to pay to store the extras. Now, two years into her retail adventure, she's developed her own "structure and formula" and GumDrops is thriving. Revenues in January 2009 were up 160% over 2008. Shanda's even got a national retail concept award and a provincial small business award under her belt.

With a background in hospitality management, and a keen sense of the fun a good pair of colorful gumboots can bring to a dreary winter day, Shanda's primary concern is customer satisfaction. That means a focus on excellent customer service and quality products.

"Mediocrity does not sit well with me," she says. "I want people to walk out of the store saying they can't wait for it to rain."

Like most entrepreneurs, Shanda's biggest challenge is not enough hours in the day.

"A business is like a baby," she says. "If it cries, you need to feed it."

Shanda deals with the overwhelming time demands by making a "conscious effort to be a human being" and making Sundays no-business days – no matter what. She turns off her computer and her phone and makes time to spend with her husband, and to focus on Shanda the person rather than Shanda the entrepreneur. Of course, she's quick to admit that her long hours bring her a level of satisfaction no 9-5 job ever could.

"I am so proud of the fact that I am providing employment in my community," she says, "And I can succeed as big as

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I want to dream.”

For other entrepreneurs dreaming of big success, Shanda offers these five tips for success:

1. Research, research, research.
2. Dream as big as you want – the world is your oyster.
3. Believe in yourself and the people around you. Anything is possible!
4. Defy your inhibitions and those who say you can't do it.
5. Learn. Be an open book.

And one final piece of advice from a now-seasoned retail veteran who's survived some tough challenges along the road to success:

“You will make mistakes. You will screw up. But how you pick yourself up will determine the path you follow.”

GumDrops Wet Weather Boutique is located on 2029 W.4th Avenue
Vancouver, BC , Canada. You can find them online at www.gumdropsonline.com.

Written by [Christina Newberry](#) for [Small Business BC](#).