

# Moonlighting can pay off for aspiring entrepreneurs

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For those of us who remember the '80's, *Moonlighting* was a detective show starring Cybil Sheppard and Bruce Willis. The term also refers to an activity outside of the normal work schedule that brings an income. Many entrepreneurs who are tentative about quitting their day jobs begin their businesses through moonlighting.

Cynthia Chirot, chief executive officer of Northwest Entrepreneur Network in Bellevue, said that one of the best things a moonlighter can do is be upfront and honest with their employer. "If you are honest with your employer from the



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Tri-City  
Economic  
Diversification

work for may have a noncompete agreement and you don't want them to take you to court or fire you because of your business. "Intellectual property is a

start, it will save a lot of frustration and hardship down the road," Chirot said.

Another piece of advice is to legally separate your new business from your day job. The company you

start, it will save a lot of frustration and hardship down the road," Chirot said.

Tri-City entrepreneurs also have some advice for people looking to start a business through moonlighting. Albert Torres works for Pay Plus Benefits in Kennewick during the day, then runs his business, Cyberbackups.com, in the evenings and on weekends. His advice is twofold.

First, try to create a business that has a symbiotic relationship with your current employer. That way you alleviate any feelings of competition. "I started Cyberbackups.com because Pay Plus Benefits was looking

for a company that provided tailor-made information backup services," said Torres. "My employer became my first customer."

Second, as your business grows, form as many relationships as possible with companies whose products and services complement your own. "You don't have to do it all," said Torres. "Some of my best sales come from relationships with network service providers who recommend Cyberbackups.com for information backup."

Pam Henderson started her business, a marketing consulting firm called NewEdge, while teaching at Washington State University Tri-Cities in Rich-

land. The university allows faculty to consult one day a week. "Consulting really enriched what I was doing in the classroom and the classroom work enriched the consulting," said Henderson. "It was a win-win for WSU and for me."

Henderson's business opportunities became so exciting that she made the decision to work full time on her company. She had this advice to give: "Make sure that the market wants your product and once you are convinced of that, make the move to becoming single-minded about your company." She continued, "It's the only way to really grow your business."

Henderson also recommend-

ed bringing in others with complementary skill sets as quickly as possible. She said, "One of the keys to being able to balance your business and your regular job is to recruit people you trust who share your vision and complement your strengths so that all of the work does not fall on your shoulders."

Moonlighting can be a great way to reduce some of the risks associated with starting a new business, but don't let it affect your performance at your regular job.

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