

## Interview with Anne Best, Founder of DryDreams Sleepwear

*Night sweats are the nemesis of chemo patients. Anne Best invented the DryDreams Sleepwear line for men and women across the United States who suffer from night sweats.*

***Tell me about your current business. What are you doing exactly?***

At DryDreams Sleepwear, we create silky smooth, sweat-wicking, odor-resistant sleepwear line for women. We are also preparing to launch the first high-tech line of scrubs for the medical, dental and veterinary industries via our sister company Performance Health Care Products Inc.

***How did you come up with the idea for your sleepwear?***

In 2000 I was diagnosed with breast cancer and during my chemotherapy treatments I suffered terribly from night sweats. Waking up throughout the night drenched in sweat wasn't only frustrating but it left me exhausted the next day. One night my husband suggested I try one of his sweat-wicking athletic shirts and while it wasn't comfortable, and certainly didn't look good, it did help me stay dry.

Thankfully, I beat breast cancer and became an advocate for women who were also fighting the disease. I kept hearing women complain that their night sweats were really draining their energy and I would suggest they try a sweat-wicking t-shirt.

This is when the fabric was just beginning to be used in other applications and I thought that if a sweat-wicking material could be produced that also had a silky feel that there might be a market. I enlisted the services of one of the top technical fabric manufacturers and they created an incredible material that not only was sweat-wicking and odor-resistant but was so sheer it could be used to fashion a nightgown. And with that, DryDreams was born.

***Did you begin your business with a partner or did you strike out on your own?***

I had a partner in more ways than one. My husband was a successful businessman so when I came to him with my idea he was able to apply his experience and help me determine some of the potential roadblocks and elements I would need to consider if I wanted to move ahead. The more we discussed the idea and researched the market the more excited he became. The next thing I knew; I had a partner! From a business perspective it couldn't have worked much better because we each brought something different to the table.

***Are there any special challenges or benefits to running a business where your husband is also your partner?***

Just like in any business there are challenges when you're working with a partner, particularly if it's a spouse, but I've found the challenges are far outweighed by the benefits. I believe that any good marriage is a partnership and you can really see that come in to play when you're faced with any kind of a trying circumstance. My husband's support during my cancer battle was instrumental in my beating cancer. He not only helped to keep our four boys living as normal a life as possible but took most everything off my plate so I could concentrate on the task at hand. We took on cancer as a team and realized the power that can come from a unified effort.

When we began working together professionally we applied this same sense of teamwork and have developed a great partnership. That's not to say that we didn't have to learn when the work hat came off and the home hat was put on. It's easy to let one meld in to the other but with such an active household we've been able to create the right kind of separation and balance. I do think it's very important to really look at work and home as two separate entities and try to keep them as separate as possible.

***Are there any special circumstances you've run across as a female entrepreneur that may be different if you were a man?***

For my business I actually think being a woman is an advantage. Thankfully, in today's business world we're getting better at looking past gender and instead focus more on results.

And while we do make a line of sleepwear for men the vast majority of customer's are women battling night sweats brought on by menopause, medical treatments and even pregnancy. So as a woman, not only was I able to identify more closely with my audience and create products that I felt would be appealing, but I'm also able to 'speak' to them in our marketing in a way that comes from a shared experience.

Hiring employees can be a challenge; particularly for a new, small business. How did you go about finding and hiring your employees?

Even though so many garments are imported we knew we wanted to manufacturer our products in the United States using only U.S. materials. We were using local sewers on an 'as-need' basis but when we heard of a manufacturing plant becoming available in Cullman, Alabama we jumped at it.

Not only did this allow us to better control our inventory but it helped us to expand as well. The Cullman area is known for having a strong garment manufacturing industry so we knew a work force would be available but we weren't quite sure on how to attract them to a still relatively new company.

What we did is implement a system that allows sewer's to 'sign up' for their shifts. This is perfect for experienced workers who aren't in a position to go full-time or who just want to supplement their incomes. While some workers are essentially working full-time we have many others who are available should we need to get a large order out quickly. This has also helped us cut costs because we are able to maintain a staff size that is in balance with our needs.

***What advice would you give to somebody else who wanted to start a similar business?***

A job is a job but starting a business needs to be a passion. Determine what you love, look towards filling a niche, research as much as you can and go go go!