



Mabel's Labels mom entrepreneurs (left to right): Tricia Mumby, Cynthia Esp, Julie Cole, Julie Ellis

Photograph by Julie Johnson
www.vineimages.ca

Sticking To It!

Mabel's Labels was the winner of the SavvyMom Mompreneur® of the Year Award in 2007. They won SavvyMom Media Inc.'s "reader's choice" contest, prevailing over 400 other mom-run businesses. They also had the honour of being crowned Canada's Top Mompreneur®.

Mabel's Labels is the original Canadian-made label company that helps moms everywhere keep track of 'the stuff kids lose.' Based in Hamilton, Ontario, and founded in 2002 by four moms with 11 children among them, Mabel's Labels' original designs and constant innovation have garnered them rapid growth and strong customer loyalty across Canada and the US – as evident in the number of votes they were able to generate for this readers' choice award.

Says Julie Cole, co-founder of Mabel's Labels, "Our proudest achievement is the day we quit our day jobs and began running Mabel's Labels full-time. We choose to live as dynamic business owners, enthusiastic mothers and inspired women and this award is a fantastic recognition of that."

They shared their story with us during a recent interview.

What kind of company is Mabel's Labels?

Mabel's Labels is the leading provider of personalized labels for the stuff kids lose. We market innovative products for both young and old. After lots of research and testing, we've developed the perfect labels. Our dishwasher- and microwave-safe stick-on-labels can be used on cups, bowls, toys, books, lunchboxes, wipes containers, show-and-tell items and more. The stick-in

shoe labels are extra-tough because shoes are tricky to label. Our iron-ons and peel and stick tag-mates make labeling clothing a snap. Products are sold online at www.mabel.ca or by phone at 1-866-30-MABEL. Mabel's Labels also distributes through camps and school fundraising drives, as well as through a network of agents.

Tell us about some of the challenges you have faced?

As the original Canadian-made label company, it was very frustrating when we were imitated and copied, but we try to remind ourselves that imitation is the greatest form of flattery. We continue to be creative and unique in the marketplace and provide the very best products and customer service. Something else that can be a challenge is having four business partners. This has many advantages because it allows us to divide up the workload and the risk. But, it also means that we have four different opinions coming to the table and it can be feisty, but always fun! It is also always a challenge dealing with the issues a company faces when it is growing quickly and changing constantly.

What major business successes can you share with us?

There are many reasons for us to celebrate. We consider the day all four partners quit their full-time jobs to commit entirely to Mabel to be a huge success. Others include the amazing press coverage we have received, moving into our big new production and office

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facility, our rate of growth, having an amazing staff team and winning the Mompreneur® of the Year award. We feel success every day when we connect with our happy and loyal customers, camps, fundraising coordinators and agents.

Who are you and what roles do each of you play in the business?

Julie Cole manages Media and Public Relations. She is married to Simon O'Keefe and they have five children: Maginnis (eight), Posy (six), Spencer (five), Jessamy (two) and Clancy (one).

Julie Ellis manages Finance and Accounting and is married to Dave Cole. Their three children are Katie (nine), Owen (six) and Liam (three).


Cynthia Esp manages Production and Human Resources. She and her husband Andrew have two children: Aiden (eight) and Gemma (five).

Tricia Mumby manages Marketing and IT and is married to Joe Lyons. Their daughter Ruby is three.

Is balancing your work lives with your family lives important?

We started this business as a means of finding that balance. What we have realized is that we have to work even harder than we did before, but owning a business does provide a flexibility that we did not have in the traditional workforce. We are able to attend a school function or take our toddler to mom and tot gymnastics, but it just means that we are up later into the night getting our work done. The balancing act is a tricky one and requires constant adjustment and managing.

What would you say to other moms who are just getting their businesses started?

Probably the most important thing is to realize that it may not be what you expect. We know many people who thought they would suddenly have an abundance of quality time with the kids, time to prepare great meals, keep that laundry pile under control, catch up with the girls for lunch occasionally, all the while running a successful business. There is really not a whole lot that is glamorous about being a mom entrepreneur. We still have laundry piles calling to us that are going unanswered! 

About the SavvyMom Mompreneur® of the Year Award:

The award program was developed by SavvyMom Media to recognize the growing force of the mom entrepreneur movement in Canada, characterized by their unique business ideas, the drive to start their own businesses and the challenge of balancing that drive with the demands of motherhood and looking after a family.

The \$18,000 prize package was comprised of cash, office equipment and business advisory services designed to take the winning business to the next level.

The media partners supporting the award program are The Mompreneur® Networking Group Inc. (www.themompreneur.com) and Canadian Parents Online (www.canadianparents.com), a division of Rogers Publishing Limited.

