

**homework** Want to work and be a stay-at-home parent? You can! Check out how other parents do it and be inspired!



Sharon is enjoying the sweet smell of success...



... with a business that works in with her family.

# And so a business was born

Babies inspire love, joy and sometimes a fabulous (and quite often lucrative) business idea. **Elizabeth Maguire** reports.

## Sharon Jackson

Brisbane mum Sharon Jackson created her natural remedy company, Healing Hippo, two years ago, when daughter Indigo was a few months old. "Indigo definitely inspired Healing Hippo," says Sharon, 34, who is also mum to a baby boy, Fox, aged 12 months. "I was working as a national retail manager

for a private aromatherapy practice before Indigo was born and it was really a dream job. I absolutely loved my role and my work and just always presumed I would go back to it after having Indigo. I never really had a strong maternal instinct before my pregnancy, but once I held Indy in my arms, I knew I couldn't leave her to go back to work."

Sharon says she created Healing Hippo after she was unable to find any natural products to use on baby Indigo, now two-and-a-half. As a qualified aromatherapist with more than 12 years experience, Sharon started making her own products in her kitchen. Today the products, which include bath oils, massage oils and creams for babies and mums, are stocked nationally.

"I was just really lucky to start off with because Indigo was a perfect child, a wonderful sleeper," she says. "My energy levels were so much higher than most other mums because of that. I wasn't a miracle mum for starting a business when she was just a few months old, I was just plain lucky."

"It was a bit hard to go out to meet retailers in the early days though, and a few times I had to take Indy along with me in the sling," she adds. "In a way, she was part of my sales pitch – she was my tiny little marketer."

Visit [www.healinghippo.com](http://www.healinghippo.com)

## Complete shift

Robert Gerrish, founder of online business adviser Flying Solo ([www.flyingsolo.com.au](http://www.flyingsolo.com.au)), says mothers are often passionate about their new role which is then transferred to a business idea.

"Mothers creating products and businesses seems to be a very common thing these days," Mr Gerrish says. "Motherhood creates a complete shift in the way women see the world, especially people who come out of an employed situation and then suddenly find themselves at home."

Sonia Williams, Melbourne mum and author of best-selling book

*Show Mummy the Money*, says more mothers than ever before are finding inspiration in home-based businesses. "The web has given mothers in particular access to international markets," Ms Williams says. "Just about every mum I know of who has her own home business also has a web presence and it is the main reason they are able to work from home and have flexible working hours."

"Another reason for the growing phenomenon is that women are having children later in life now so they are more educated and have established networks they can access to help launch their home business." Visit [www.showmummythemoney.com.au](http://www.showmummythemoney.com.au)

## Alison Basson

Gold Coast mum Alison Basson was not looking to start a new business when she created baby signing program Tiny Talk. The 34-year-old mother to Ellie, two-and-a-half, created Tiny Talk after watching a US documentary about the benefits of teaching babies to sign. Unable to find an Australian program to use, Alison developed her own.

"I started signing with Ellie when she was five months old and within two months she was signing back," Alison says.

Alison spent more than a year researching the Tiny Talk program which essentially teaches children to communicate through signing before they are able to talk. Unlike sign language for the hearing impaired, which is a more complicated system, baby signing is more about gestures.

"When Ellie first started signing back to us it was so thrilling that she could communicate with us before she could speak," Alison says. "It opened



Signing up for her own business was easy for Alison.

up a whole new world to us, and also allowed us to have a look into hers."

Nowadays Tiny Talk continues to operate from Alison's four-bedroom home, but Ellie has started going to childcare which has allowed Alison more time to devote to the business.

"Even though the business is run from the home, I like to keep both sides of my life separate," she says. "When I'm working, my mind is completely on my work. And when I'm with Ellie, my time is all for her."

Visit [www.tinytalk.com.au](http://www.tinytalk.com.au)

**DID YOU KNOW...** The baby industry represents big business in Australia. Parents spent \$1.3 billion on their babies in 2004, according to a Parents, Babies and Children's Expo survey. That figure was a 20 per cent increase from the year 2000.