

Always focus on reality

Zelda Cawthorne

WHEN Sonia Williams decided to be a wedding photographer, she underestimated the competition. Worse, the former accountant knew nothing about the impact of that indispensable nuptial aid, Photoshop.

"Every bride I met knew about that photo-editing computer program and their demands nearly drove me crazy," Ms Williams said.

"I had everything from, 'cut my mother-in-law out of the pictures' to a request to paste in a shot of the family dog. He'd been photographed the morning of the wedding and was all dressed up — not a cute look."

Ms Williams' trials as the frazzled creator of Sublime Photography would make a riotous comedy. She has used them in a sobering way: a case study for her just-published book, *Show Mummy The Money*.

This time, she knows her target market intimately: all those women who anguish over whether to be stay at home mums, or go back to work and resort to childcare.

A far better alternative is to run a home-based business, according to Ms Williams, from North Caulfield. Her 244-page book is full of advice on how to plan, proceed and prosper.

The author, whose husband Martin coaches financial planners, knows her stuff. She has a business degree from Monash University and has held senior posts in the public and private sectors, from major accounting firms to VicRoads.

Her photography venture, planned before the arrival of her children, Jer Tarme, 3, and Ethan, almost 2, made her savvy about the pitfalls of home-based businesses.

"I was determined to avoid childcare, so I set up Sublime before I got pregnant," Ms Williams said.

"It seemed ideal, because I love photography and weddings. Unfortunately, I failed to do enough research and ended up working ridiculously long hours to satisfy my clients' demands."

"Forget traditional wedding photo albums. These days, you need to be skilled in digital artwork and be able to produce a sophisticated coffee table book."

Ms Williams, 33, said the notion that women should aggressively climb the corporate ladder and barely pause for motherhood in order to achieve equality with men, was "all wrong".

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Mum's the word: Sonia Williams, with daughter Jer Tarme, 3, has written a book on her business experiences. Picture: BILL McAULEY

Making it work for you

- LOOK to work with people who are passionate about your cause and what you are trying to achieve.
- ASSESS what a person can bring to the business relationship in the longer term. It might be great networks or expertise in a particular field.
- PUT your best foot forward as first impressions — even the way you are dressed all count.
- LISTEN to your intuition. If you feel a person is not right for your business end the relationship.
- BE specific about your needs whether you are sourcing particular goods or services, ensuring there is no room for misinterpretation.
- ALWAYS end relationships on a good note; don't burn bridges.
- WORD of mouth is alive and well in business and a lot of business is based on referral.
- BEING nice is free, less exhausting and it costs nothing to be civil. Save the energy you would use being angry.

Source: Sonia Williams

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"The truth is that women suffer enormous stress in their efforts to combine their multiple roles at work and at home, and the high costs of childcare — emotional and financial — place them in a lose/lose situation," she said.

"Instead of all that angst, why not use your professional expertise and networks, and be your own boss? Many women have skills and ideas that lend themselves to successful ventures."

In her research for *Show Mummy The Money*, Ms Williams discovered numerous Australian role models — all full-time mums when they started their businesses.

Among them are Victoria's Diana Williams whose Fernwood Fitness women's health clubs have an annual turnover of \$75 million, Western Australia's Corinna Herbert whose Snugg as a Bug baby wrap is sold nationwide, and Tasmania's Lindy Honeychurch who has won an innovation grant for her water-saving device Aqua Divert.

Net link: www.showmummythemoney.com.au