

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Mum's the wordsmith for home advice

By PHILIP HOPKINS

LIKE a lot of working women, Sonia Williams was shocked when she suddenly found herself at home looking after children.

"One minute you've got an active career, then, overnight, you're up to your neck in nappies," she said. "You love your kids, but you don't want them to be your sole focus in life."

Ms Williams, 33, and mother of two, found a solution: she started a home-based business.

The experience was so rewarding she wanted to tell everybody about it. In between her babies' sleeps, she began to write a book. The result is *Show Mummy the Money: how you can be an at home mum and make money*, a 220-page tome.

Ms Williams, a qualified accountant, set herself up with a wedding photo business after deciding not to return to work.

Her experiences — learning about the need to have a target market and a business plan, and how to differentiate the business from competitors — are just some of the themes developed in the book.

Ms Williams used her accounting qualifications to set out the technical side of running a business — general accounting skills, the GST, intellectual property and even how to go online.

Ms Williams' experiences are similar to those of her namesake, Serena Williams, who wrote a book, *Baby and Me* about the first 100 days of motherhood.

Serena Williams, a writer and editor who also works from home in Melbourne, had been a successful career woman with a good salary. "I didn't want child care. Like a lot of women, I didn't want to be away from my kids," she said. "Working from home means I don't let my skills slide."

Serena said women's home-based businesses were a growing trend. "It can be the best and worst of both worlds, especially when your computer breaks down and there is no help desk," she said.

Technology had also been a boon, with many mothers selling their goods online through e-Bay, she said.

Starting a business from home requires discipline and hard work. Sonia Williams said it was certainly not for everyone.



Mum's up for the money: Sonia Williams.

PICTURE: ANGELA WYLIE

"My book is not just a technical guide," she said. "I try and get the person to look from within. Mothers can assess their position at every point. At the end of the book, they can make up their mind."

Ms Williams said ideas for home-based businesses could come from unexpected quarters. One woman, Leanne Preston, developed the Quit Nits product

when the standard treatment for head lice created a reaction in her daughter's scalp. Ms Preston spent a year developing a lotion. Wild Child has now captured 10 per cent of the Australian market for head-lice treatments.

About 2500 copies of the book have been printed. Ms Williams is selling it through nurseries and maternity wear stores — places where mums are likely to go with

their children. She is also on the public-speaking circuit and hosts seminars.

One thing is certain: writing and marketing the book has now become Ms Williams' new home-based business.

LINK

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