

Julie Deane, the Woman behind Cambridge Satchel Company

## Description

You may have heard of our next inspirational mother thanks to Google and itâ??s feature in one of their adverts. Itâ??s a pretty special story so itâ??s no wonder the internet giant thought it was worthy of sharing.

Julie Deane was a stay-at-home mother of two in Cambridge, UK. Julie had just found out that that her daughter Emily who was eight was being bullied at school. Her first thought was to move the kids to another nearby school, but there was no space. The only other option was to send Max and Emily to a private school, but she needed a way of paying for the school fees.

Julie needed a business. She made a list of 10 things she could do that would meet the school fees, ranking them in order of potential growth, funding requirements and speed of return on investment. There was a clear winner, one that was actually inspired by Harry Potter â?? satchels. Julie wanted to be able to buy her children satchels like Harry and Hermione would have, but found it very difficult to do so.

Realizing there was a gap in the market, her business idea was born and the Cambridge Satchel Company started with just â??Â£600 ($950) in savings at her kitchen table in Cambridge. The rest is history â?? Julie found a manufacturer to outsource to, made a website, read books on guerrilla

marketing and realized that the internet was her biggest ally in getting the satchels out there. Julie sent hundreds of emails to fashion editors and bloggers â?? an area she admits she had â??Å?no ideaâ?•Â• about. These bloggers were her first champions, and sheâ??s worked with over the years to create an organic buzz, sponsoring giveaways and gifting them to influential people.

*Julie at one of her stores*

Suddenly the Deanesâ?? house was filled with boxes â?? it was time to scale up the business in terms of storage so Julie went to look at sheds. While she was there her phone pinged constantly, which Julie thought meant there was a problem with her website, but it was actually hundreds and hundreds of orders coming in. The Guardian newspaper had put their red 14-inch satchel in their Christmas gift guide and her fledging business was booming. As the sales started to come in, Deane made sure that her DIY approach continued, with the satchels initially dispatched in frozen sprout boxes or tulip bulb boxes from the garden centre. â??Å?I would handwrite every tag. People absolutely loved the authenticity of it,â?•Â• she says.

The real core at her business, however was her family. For Julie, â??Å?motivation was absolutely key. It would never have been enough to say â??Ë?I want a nice car or to be a bit flashâ??, because itâ??s really hard workâ?•Â•. The need to provide for her children was enough to make it a success and her own mother has been a huge part of the business also, something Julie describes as â??Å?one of the best decisionsâ?•Â• she ever made. Her family is a passionate about the Satchel Company as Julie is, with the kids acting as models for the first product shots and Emily even helping out with customer service in the early days when they couldnâ??t produce bags fast enough.

*A Cambridge Satchel in â??Ochreâ??*

Julie remembers her own satchel from when she was a girl, which lasted her entire school life. She has carried one of the original 15-inch dark brown satchels since 2008, which she proudly shows is â??Å?still going strong.â?•Â• The quality of the bags is testament to Julieâ??s business acumen â?? she trusted her instincts and stuck with what she knew, using suppliers and craftsmen she trusted in the UK. Itâ??s still this way today as for Julie, â??Å?constant communication and commitment to the community are more important that making cheaply and in bulkâ?•Â•.

Thatâ??s not to say Julie hasnâ??t scaled back where it was possible to do so. Her company was built during the recession, without bank loans or going overdrawn. Until 2014, The Cambridge Satchel Company was still operating from her kitchen table so overheads were kept to a minimum (it wasnâ??t until Saks Fifth Avenue buyers wanted to visit their â??Ë?showroomsâ?? that she realized she had to expand). The head office has now moved to a business park in Cambridge, but Julie is keen to advise aspiring entrepreneurs not to get ahead of themselves. Her DIY approach meant she

could remain focused and creative as well as authentic.

*The lounge specifically created for bloggers only at the Covent Garden store*

Her next piece of advice is to use the internet to your full advantage, â??Å?with a good product, determination and integrity â?? people will help you to go viral!â?•Â• The Cambridge Satchel Company grew thanks to this, with social media and word of mouth doing their marketing for them.

Julieâ??s passionate about the internet, calling it the â??Å?lifebloodâ?•Â• for small businesses and would love to see everybody being able to be found on the internet even if they donâ??t have their own website â?? itâ??s no surprise that Google love her.

Keen to push creative and technological boundaries, Julie used her blogging community to experiment with colors after her core was in place in order to keep the look fresh, taking their advice on trends and what she could do with the manufacturers in terms of leather treatments. Itâ??s forward thinking like this that means the company has grown to have four of its own stores in the UK as well as product in Harrods and Bloomingdales.

Until 2014 Julie had expanded the business without private investment, but now Index Ventures are helping her continue her overseas expansion with an incredible â??Â£14m injection. Despite the ever-growing business, Julie and her mom are still very much involved â?? there isnâ??t a single job Julie hasnâ??t done herself and she likes to know whatâ??s happening in all the different areas â?? â??Å?Iâ??ll suddenly appear on the Facebook page or the Twitter page, Iâ??ll answer the phones, Iâ??ll respond to emails and I still do the embossing.â?•Â•

This, of course, means that her work life blends with her family life and she balances it by â??Å?enjoying the momentâ?•Â• â?? she takes the children to school and collects them, then catches up on emails while they do homework. Cambridge Satchel has made so many things possible for the Deane family, and for Julie, â??Å?showing the children what can be done with determination and hard work is importantâ?•Â•.




*The Cambridge Satchel Company*

Business is still booming and Julieâ??s story is an inspiration to mothers, and everyone else, around the world. She did what it took to keep her promise to her children â?? her proudest moment. She now has an OBE for her services to entrepreneurship. Her lasting piece of advise in starting your own business:

â??Å?Make sure your road will reach your goal.â?•Â•

## CATEGORY

1. TUTORIALS

## POST TAG

1. business
2. cambridge satchel company
3. fashion
4. julie deane
5. mother

## Category

1. TUTORIALS

## Tags

1. business
2. cambridge satchel company
3. fashion
4. julie deane
5. mother

**Date Created**
July 17, 2015
**Author**
julia-good