

# STUDENT READING

## **Melissa Read and Katie Westoll, *Learn from Your Mistakes.***

“It was scary thinking about being in business alone.” That is why Melissa Reade and Katie Westoll decided to go into business together and started the partnership Melika Recycle in Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada. Although they were only 14 and 15 years old respectively, they were well aware of the challenges that partners face in business. They had to work very hard to make time for discussions and the ironing out of differences. “Good communication is the key to success, especially if you have a partner,” says Melissa. They have conquered this problem and since July 1994 have not looked back.

These entrepreneurs buy old neckties from used clothing stores and clean, press, and paint designs on them to make them ready for the market place. They also make hair clips from recycled items like puzzle pieces, Scrabble letters and poker chips to give a new look for resale. They offer customers the option of placing special orders for the design of their choice and people have requested such designs as happy faces, fish, fruit, and vegetables. With the \$180 they received from the “I Want to Be a Millionaire” Program, they were able to purchase enough neckties, clips, and paint for their first production run. Profits from the sale of these items was spent on more supplies.

They market their products at farmers’ markets, through trade shows and conferences and selected stores in the local mall. They have even won a Best Display Award. This unique team has developed a quota system that allows each of them to set their own schedules, work at their own pace and organize a production routine that allows them time for other activities. Melissa and Katie, both 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, are very active at school, Melissa with the Shared Reading Program and Drama Club, and Katie with the Track and Field Winter Program and drama.

What do their friends think about all of this? According to Melissa, “they are very supportive and buy our products. Most of our close friends are also in business. They are part of our network,” Katie says. With everything that is going on in their lives, Melissa and Katie feel it is all worth it. Their company received an Environmental Award of \$250 and won \$50 in the “I Want to Be a Millionaire” Program Essay Contest for an essay about their mentor Susan Rann. What advice do they have for other interested in business? “Try it. Start out small. Learn from your mistakes. But most of all, remember it is not automatic success. You have to work at it.”

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