

Nicole DeBoom's Story

Written by Angela Newman

As a professional triathlete, Nicole DeBoom spent countless hours over the years swimming, running and biking. In fact she was a recruited high school swimmer and attended Yale University graduating with a Bachelor's in Sociology. Following her graduation she became a professional triathlete. Then one day while on a training run she saw her reflection in the store window and realized that fashion was missing from the fitness world for women.

When she got home she jotted down a few ideas and soon thereafter decided to start her own company, SkirtSports. SkirtSports a fitness apparel company began in 2005 supplying stylish workout skirts for all types of sports activities. It has grown to expand to other lines of clothing over the years. In addition, Nicole organizes 5K races in select cities throughout the US. The races are called Skirt Chaser 5k's. (www.skirtchaser5k.com). All women runners should check it out! In fact, Nicole has a video on the site to tell you a little about it.

Now although it may sound like she went from college to triathlete to business owner so quickly and so easily, she has had to work hard for that success. Her success is attributed to her business acumen, hard work, goal setting and seeking advice from others that have been-there-done-that. One key component to her success is goal setting. Nicole learned the value of goal setting at a very young age. As a kid swimmer, she had to set goals for herself, plan how to achieve them, work hard to get there and learn mental toughness. That same discipline holds true today for her employees and business. All of her employees work on setting goals and she holds regularly scheduled company wide meetings that focus on goal setting.

She groups her goals into three categories: personal, fitness and career. Goals seem to have more of an impact if written down, reviewed and said out loud consistently. It keeps the goal in front of you as a reminder that this is something you want to accomplish. That might sound strange to some but it's true. In fact, Nicole recently sent an e-blast to her database

about New Year's Resolutions and declared two goals. "Now I have to keep them!" she said. And now that I've told everyone who reads this story - there's no turning back Nicole!

Her company operates on the values of relationships, innovation, hard work, fitness, fun and passion. Nicole is a firm believer in having "fun" on the job. In fact SkirtSports was built from her passion about fitness and fun and believe me, not everyone thinks fitness is fun. I for one do not enjoy any cardio exercise in the gym or aerobic classes. However, I thoroughly enjoy walking and hiking in parks and lifting weights at the gym. But with all the enthusiasm and passion Nicole has for fitness, I'm sure if women like me were around her for any length of time, we would soon find the "fun" in running.

Running along the beach may be fun but running a business is not fun 24/7 so how does Nicole keep focused and keep forging ahead when times get tough? She says, "I use many of the tools I learned as an athlete in the business world. I learned that you put one foot in front of the other and you persevere. If you can move along steadily, people will drop like flies all around you. Flexibility and problem-solving are key, as is an ability to keep the emotions out of business decisions. Anything can be solved; the key is finding the best solution."

Many women hold positions of high responsibility in corporations or operate their own business. Some enjoy their job while others are not necessarily happy with what they are doing, or are no longer challenged and no longer look forward to going to work in the morning. I personally think life is too short not to enjoy what you do everyday. So whether you decide to change jobs, start your own company or stay put because life is good where you're at, it's important to "Enjoy the process. If it's no longer fun, move the heck on!" Nicole says. "It takes balls (or guts, however you want to say it) and a lot of inner strength. But enjoy the process because every day will be busier and more complex than the day before."

Nicole continues to grow her company through the values she focuses her business on and in addition gives back to her community. She gives back through the 5K races by encouraging communities to stay fit while of course looking pretty in SkirtSports apparel. SkirtSports gives money, product and other resources to many non-profit organizations with

the focus on promoting fitness. She sees her philanthropic contributions expanding to kids' fitness foundations in the future.

Nicole's advise to women, "If you believe passionately in your idea, and you have done the research to show that it could lead to a viable business, then you have no excuse to take the leap. Now or never! You do not want to be the person who says, "I had that idea and never acted on it; now this person created a multimillion dollar company!" Great advice!

You can visit Nicole's Fitness Apparel at www.skirtsports.com.