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Wendy McClung, a recreational marathon runner, was experiencing severe night sweats due to menopause. It was not unusual for her to change her shirt two or three times a night. One night, not realizing it, the shirt she grabbed in the dark was one of her running shirts. Waking up the next morning, she realized she had slept through the rest of the night without any discomfort from a wet shirt.

Discussing it with her neighbour Jutta Smardenka, the next morning, they both saw a light. Smardenka, already in the fashion design field,

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Discussing it with her neighbour Jutta Smardenka, the next morning, they both saw a light. Smardenka, already in the fashion design field, explained to McClung that sportswear – like the running shirt she had grabbed in her mid-night wardrobe change – is made with a special fabric that helps whisk moisture from the skin. McClung wondered out loud to her friend why they couldn't make sleepwear out of it. An idea was born.

McClung recalls, "It was around the Christmas holidays and we were heading out shopping. We agreed to wait until after the holidays." They were both too excited to wait. "We started talking that night," she recalls.

Smardenka had worked with Cool Max® and other moisture-management fabrics in the sportswear trade and knew its reputation. As a runner, McClung relied on it. Since the fabric worked so well for athletes, the two agreed it could also bring relief and comfort to menopausal women.

In January 2000 HotCool Wear™ opened its doors for business. Through trial and error, Smardenka's background knowledge of design and fabric, and McClung's background in business, they developed their own patented moisture wicking polyester that they affectionately call HCW (HotCool Wear).

Starting with nightshirts and sleepwear, Smardenka and McClung expanded the line to include active wear and casual wear. Not long after starting up the business, a man suffering from night sweats asked



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... could accommodate him. He ended up buying a nightshirt and cutting off the ruffles. Realizing the need to know your market and to get to them, Smardenka and McClung quickly started designing their wear as well.

McClung stresses the importance of keeping your customers happy. "We boast about their exceptional focus on service. "We respond to mails and complaints quickly and we sleep quickly."

Through feedback from customers, the team discovered that others were also reaping the health benefits of the fabric they had invented. People suffering from diabetes, going through chemotherapy, those with Multiple Sclerosis and others, were all enjoying the comfort of HotCool Wear™.

Although it was sleepless, Smardenka and McClung felt that men to comfort, it was important that the clothing be stylish, so they extended their fabric line to include pajamas as well. Being the first to offer this type of fabric in a pajama was another milestone for them.

The two know that accessibility and marketing are key to any successful business. HotCool Wear™ products are available online, as well as at a number of shops across Canada and beyond, but business across the border can be difficult. "We try very hard to keep everything Canadian – the fabric, the labor, everything," says McClung.

Operating a business is demanding. In addition to operating HotCool Wear™, McClung runs her own publishing company and

Smardenka still works in the Fashion and design industry, specializing in sportswear. They agree that there are times when their focus is challenged, but they are quick to get back on track.

These two women share a philosophy of business and of life. As McClung says, "Dealing with business, the best way to get through the day is with humor." To prove the point, their website shows a picture of the two women on a bed in their "Hot Mommas" T-shirts. Smardenka jokingly says, "I never thought at this age I would be in bed with another woman!"

Working in a partnership can be demanding, but also educational. In a partnership, all parties need to be kept informed and need to make decisions together. "Partnership has changed me for the better. It is not always about me," says Smardenka. McClung stresses the importance of having in any partnership, "Give people a chance and they will put their heart out to you," she says.

Life demands a lot from all of us. To help lighten the load, Smardenka advises, "If you are doing something you enjoy, it does not become a burden."

"You know when you have a good thing," agrees McClung. "Life is too short. It is not all about the money."

In life and in business, McClung and Smardenka are on the same page. The success of their business comes down to knowing their market, listening to their customers and providing the best service they can.

INSIGHT: WENDY MCCLUNG, AGE 52, JUTTA SMARDENKA, AGE 56 TORONTO, ON

**Company:** HotCool Wear Inc.  
**Industry:** Design and Manufacturing  
**Years in Business:** 6 **Employees:** 3 full-time, 1 part-time  
**Awards:** Health Award 2004  
**Community Work:** MS Society, Shelter for Women  
**Board Serving:** Canadian Circulation Audit Bureau (CCAB)

**Advice for Starting a Business (Wendy)**

1. Believing in your product or service is not enough to be successful. Demonstrate with all the passion you can.
2. Set realistic goals that are not always or entirely monetary. Ask yourself where do I want to be with this in one year, two years, five years?
3. Have confidence in your abilities and take risks accordingly.
4. Do your homework/research. Find out who or what your competition is.
5. Have a sense of humor. Laugh whenever you can.

**Most Difficult Part of Starting a Business (Wendy)**  
The most difficult part was dealing with the financing.

**The Easiest Thing About Starting a Business (Wendy)**  
Because I had a partner, I'd say the whole process was pretty easy, time-consuming, but fairly easy. I may not say that if I had to do it alone. Our responsibilities are split in that Jutta handles the production and I take care of the business end.

**Advice On Hiring Employees (Jutta)**

1. Look for someone who will help anywhere.
2. An employee should have a good work ethic.
3. Hire individuals with pleasant personalities.

**What Entrepreneurs Should Do To Promote Their Business (Jutta)**

1. Attend and participate in trade shows.
2. Spread the word about your business.
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