



Making it happen

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A new photo sharing service can teach us two key lessons

Whether you're travelling for business or pleasure, it's highly likely that you are carrying a camera – either a stand-alone or one that's integrated into a cellphone or iPad. But what will you do with all those images you capture on your travels? You could email them, post them on Facebook or Flickr, or just let them accumulate on your hard drive.

PICTURE DELIVERY

Deb Whitman has an alternative: a way to make those photos magically appear on the screens of close friends and relatives who want to enjoy your pictures again and again. Instead of them searching for your latest, you decide which pictures will automatically be displayed on their onscreen photo frame. And regardless of whether this idea appeals to you, Photo Mambo (the name of her new company and service) and Whitman embody two useful aspects of entrepreneurship.

MAMBO MEANS

The first is where ideas come from. Though entrepreneurship lore celebrates the 'aha moment' (which generally occurs in the shower – hopefully without a camera), the story of Photo Mambo is less picture perfect, but more consistent with how most new ventures come to be.

Before appointing herself founder and CEO of Photo



“The idea is so obvious that it could have occurred to any of us”

Mambo, Whitman worked at Adobe with responsibility for digital imaging software such as Photoshop. Rewind further and she worked in digital media presentation at Microsoft. Her experience with consumer software goes back to the 1980s, when she was responsible for marketing the personal finance package Quicken, at Intuit.

So the idea for Photo Mambo represents a combination of work experience and the personal desires of a mother who was born in the Midwest and wants to share her daughter's photographs with non-technical family members halfway across the country.

ACTION SHOT

The second interesting point that this story raises is where action comes from. Though consistent with Whitman's work and personal life, the idea behind Photo Mambo is sufficiently obvious that it could have occurred to any of us. And the technology necessary to implement it is readily available. So what separates her from the rest of us who are wondering why we didn't do it?

The answer comes from the same place as the idea. Her means. Every person is a unique collection of the things they know, the people they know and the things they

have. Those inputs can offer the basis for an entrepreneurial idea. But they also offer a place to start taking action. Because Whitman worked in software, she already knew that the idea was feasible and what level of effort it would take to create it. Because she knew people who understand digital photography, it was easy for her to find advice and collaborators. And so instead of waiting for those people magically to show up, pursuing lengthy education on the topic, or hoping for £10m in venture funding, she could get up in the morning and start taking action. Which is really what makes her an entrepreneur.

PHOTO SEQUENCE

The very first release of Photo Mambo has just become available. As with any entrepreneurial idea, it may start out a huge hit or, more likely, provide the foundation for changes, adaptations and iterations that ultimately become a meaningful business. But, in order to get those customer, partner and developer reactions that can evolve it into a successful business, the idea first had to be put into action.

What idea have you had today? ●

Make grandma happy

Send her a photo of her grandchild buried in leaves

details

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