

The challenges you have faced during the transition of working outside of the home to launching your home-based business: I really had no challenges other than learning how to live lean. Engineering and

Your reasons for operating a home-based business: I was working part time when my wife and I decided to take our idea (which we had for years) to the next level. We formed our LLC in August, 2010 and then began sourcing everyone we needed. We are home based because we can do everything from our home, at least for now. The only thing we added was our business' Toll Free Number. This eliminated setting up an office and paying rent. Obviously, our growth will necessitate moving to an office with a distribution facility, but we aren't there yet with revenue to do that. We are brand new!!

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Description of your business (target client, description of services, products, etc.): Urnaments & Pet Urnaments are keepsake urns designed in the style of a holiday ornament. Their unique functionality allows them to be placed on any type ornamental hanger anywhere in the home or on a Christmas tree. My product is purposely designed to be appealing and warmhearted, not solemn and morose. This is because I want people to be drawn to where the happy memories of their loved one or pet reside; to help heal, not continue to grieve. My target client is everyone and my website is open for business. However, I also sell through crematories, online urn catalogs, pet shops and gift shops.



Michael Martino

Business Name: Urnaments, LLC
Website: www.urnaments.com

designing my product were the biggest challenges but that would have been the case, whether I was working from home or not.

How did you overcome those challenges? We changed how much we ate out in restaurants; what we did on weekends; no vacations. We learned to squirrel away what little money we were making. My wife and I had no jobs and were living off savings as well as drawing out some of our IRA money.

What has been your biggest achievement thus far? Putting my manufacturing team together; most importantly the company (found on the Internet) in Fenggang, China. I went there three times in 2011 to monitor our engineering, prototypes, designs, etc. Traveling halfway around the world and utilizing my skills as an engineer were definitely my biggest achievement so far. Selling product will be a nice achievement too, hopefully soon.

Specifically, how do you market your business? I market as I am doing now with you. I am also developing a social media base through VOCUS. Each day, my wife and I target a city, Google the crematories and urn companies located there and send them brochures. We also work through e-mails, but we found a brochure in the mail is less likely to be thrown out than an e-mail is likely to be deleted due to SPAM fears.

What methods have not been successful for you? We thought going true "grass roots" in the county where we live (visiting local veterinarians, pet shops, funeral homes, etc...) would be a good start. But it wasn't. A memorial urn like ours is a niche product. Pet shops like them, but shelf space is precious and they have to consider how many they would actually sell.

We do have a dozen venues in our county where they are sold, but we need HUNDREDS. Online is where we are succeeding. We can be found on over a dozen sites from Hawaii to Florida, even some veterinarians and pet hospitals.

One piece of advice you would offer someone just starting their business: I am a writer so allow me this metaphor which sums it all up. You can only stare at the great vast ocean for so long before you must sail into it as an entrepreneur. And when the land disappears and you realize there is no turning back, you will be scared. So do what I did. Think of how great you will feel when you sight land on the shore ahead of you.

Money needs, rejection, basic anxiety, BILLS..... these fears you will have. Believe in your business, put in the time and think about when you reach that other shore. My personal strength is that I am 56 years old and have had a long career as an engineer before the Internet. To now fuse my wisdom and skills with the informational power of the Internet is awesome. It is like I am an old baseball player who started taking steroids to continue hitting home runs (which I don't condone, but you get my drift)