

PHOENIX Business Journal

4.14.2008

for Ann Siner, founder and CEO of Eco-Chic Consignments. Her company sells clothing, furniture and other resale merchandise at 11 boutiques across the Valley under the brands My Sister's Closet and My Sister's Attic.

Prior to opening her first store in 1991, she worked as a director of marketing at PetSmart, a job she found difficult to cast aside.



Koerber-Walker

"It's kind of like stepping off a tall building," Siner said. "Is there going to be a trampoline, or are you just going to hit the ground?" Fortunately for Siner, her experience as a marketing executive gave her a boost during her company's growing pains. She had learned strategies, such as how best to cater to customers, that were critical to her stores' survival.

But initially she had trouble licensing the business. She was originally classified as a pawn shop, and she had to get special licensing to become a resale/thrift store.

Like Fridley, Siner had to self-finance her venture, to the tune of about \$25,000 for her first store. On the positive side, Arizona's low taxes and lack of regulatory barriers and unions made it easy to get a company going, she said.

Similarly, Fridley found her experience in the staffing industry benefited her when she opened Hire Source. Still, that didn't reduce her work load. Early on, she got so busy she would sleep at her office.

Marcia Rowley's work and family lives are one and the same. She co-owns four businesses with her husband, John Rowley. One is International Cruise & Excursions, which puts together vacation packages all over the world. Although the business is based in Phoenix, it also runs offices in Australia, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa and many European countries.

Rowley and her husband poured \$100,000 of their own money into their businesses and didn't turn to government assistance or loans to get started. She cited a large talent pool and lenient regulatory environment as pluses for entrepreneurs in Arizona.

AT A GLANCE

Eco-Chic Consignments

Owner: Ann Siner
Founded: 2001
'07 revenue: \$11 million
Employees: 110
Web: www.mysisterscloset.com

Hire Source Staffing Solutions

Owner: Jill Fridley
Founded: 2000
'07 revenue: \$4 million
Employees: Six
Web: www.hiresourcestaffing.com

International Cruise & Excursions

Owners: Marcia and John Rowley
Founded: 1997
'07 revenue: \$325 million
Employees: More than 1,000 worldwide
Web: www.icegallery.com

M Group Scenic Studios

Owner: Lori McAllister-Antol
Founded: 1991
'07 revenue: Undisclosed
Employees: 21
Web: www.mgroupscenic.com



Ann Siner, the woman behind My Sister's Closet and My Sister's Attic brands, risked a high-profile position in corporate America to launch her own venture in 1991.

JIM POLK/PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL