

Client Spotlight

Monica Kriese, Career Journey: September 2015

People today are consumed with being successful. They measure their success by how much money they make or how many prized possessions they own. Still, there are those who define success in a different way, and Monica Kriese is one of those.

Success for Monica is about abundance. However, abundance isn't about money. It is about the quality of her life, how she is living her life, and other aspects of her life. It means enjoying a comfortable lifestyle, making time to spend with family and friends, as well as time with herself, all while maintaining a rewarding career. Monica feels fortunate she has found this balance. She sees far too many people who get so caught up in their work that they lose sight of what is really important, which Monica identifies as working to *live* and not *living* to work.

“[Monica] was no longer able to work out of her home and felt her only option was to apply to the government for support and become reliant on the system.”

Throughout the 1990s Monica had a demanding but highly rewarding career in marketing. However, as a single mother of an infant son living with a complex mental illness it became more difficult over time to meet the demands of her career. There never seemed to be enough time to complete her client projects and there was no time for self-care. The many interruptions to attend to her son's challenges—appointments, meetings, and his growing inability to attend daycare due to the complexity of his disorder—repeatedly took her away from work. Still, Monica managed to get by under these circumstances, but just barely.

Monica's son progressed into Kindergarten at the age of five, but after a period of trial and error he could no longer function in the regular school environment. It was recommended that he attend an alternate education program in another city close by. This required Monica to drive him to and from school, and because Monica's son was unable to cope well, she would receive frequent calls from the school to bring him home early. The writing was

on the wall, and Monica became unable to work the regular hours of a conventional job outside of her home.

This went on for two years until it was decided that Monica's son would require homeschooling, starting in grade three. As a child with high needs, Monica's son required extra care and attention, and his needs took precedence. In 2009 Monica was forced to sacrifice the contract position she loved and with it, her sole source of income. She was no longer able to work out of her home and felt her only option was to apply to the government for support and become reliant on the system.

As a recipient of income support, Monica realized this would not only impact her sense of self-worth, it would mean she would have to sell her car. Monica needed a vehicle to take her son to his frequent medical treatments in a neighbouring city. She was deeply concerned with her lack of options and was caught in a real bind.



Monica Kriese, Salmon Arm, B.C.

Fortunately, Monica had a great support system, and in November 2010, one of her friends suggested that she expand her home-based business by offering more virtual services. Then, an associate of Monica's who had heard of the Canadian Society for Social Development (*now Make A Change Canada*) recommended that Monica explore her options through our programming. Monica was immediately interested in the online, college accredited *IBDE Web Essentials program and quickly arranged for funding to begin her studies. In November 2010 she

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eagerly joined the group of students embarking on six months of online study.

Although Monica already had solid experience in computer technology, she didn't always find the course material easy. Monica struggled most with the course on website development and questioned whether her decision to return to school had been wise.

“Believe you will create an abundant life,” Monica says, “and you will!”

Then, as the program progressed into the rapidly evolving and ever-expanding world of web-based marketing and design, Monica began to gain a clear sense of direction. She discovered a topic area that she really enjoyed and realized she could apply her existing skills and experience in marketing to build the kind of home-based business that she was desperately seeking.

Monica successfully graduated in April 2011 and today runs **Gail-Force Marketing**, a thriving virtual business and frequented blog. Monica is so successful today that she can be selective about the work she accepts. She controls her overall volume of work and ensures that she has the time she needs to devote to her son and his ongoing mental health challenges and, just as importantly, to herself. Because most of her work is completed over the internet, Monica does not have to spend time on a daily commute, and when she does travel out of town on business, she can hire a caregiver for her son.

With Gail-Force Marketing Monica has created a niche market that bridges the divide between website development and social media. On **Monica's Facebook page** you will find useful tips and information related to traditional marketing and social media for small business.

While most business owners recognize the importance of social media to their overall marketing strategy, few can actually proceed. Most lack the time needed to properly

maintain their social channels. To meet this need Monica offers a full service marketing strategy to businesses that fully integrates social media with their marketing plans and, most importantly, manages it in a professional and timely way.

Based on her experience, what advice can Monica give others wanting to pursue a successful home-based business? Monica believes that every client matters to a new business. However, once your business is established, you can focus more closely on your own needs. “Pick and choose the work you take on,” Monica advises, “but don't bite off more than you can chew.” Monica also believes, “You should concentrate on developing a high level of expertise in the areas that excite you most and create your own niche market.” “Believe you will create an abundant life,” Monica says, “and you will!”

Anyone fortunate to meet Monica in person gets the immediate sense that she is an expert in her chosen field. She is bold, decisive, and holds an abundance of key knowledge. It is also clear that Monica is an involved and caring mother, and her son's care and well-being is central to her direction in life. Monica is not only a successful entrepreneur, but at heart she is really an expert at survival. Against the odds she set out to create a viable future and has been highly successful. Monica is not only surviving, she is thriving.

*Internet Business Development for Entrepreneurs

To contact Monica, please visit her website, email her, or call (250) 833-6100.

We are always looking for contributions from past and present participants to learn more about their business ideas, career journeys, triumphs, and challenges.

Please send your ideas to:
newsletter@makeachangecanada.com

Make A Change Canada/Faire un Changement Canada

Anne-Marie Edgar, Executive Director

E: amedgar@makeachangecanada.com

D: (250) 352-1378 | TF: 1-888-9-ASPIRE x700

www.makeachangecanada.com

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