

From GBADigest.com - **FEATURED ENTREPRENEUR****Pat Carroll****Gifts of Excellence**

By Christine Harrington

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Patricia Carroll, owner of Gifts of Excellence in Hamden, Connecticut started her business as a means of raising support for the mission trips she has participated in since 1988. As an ordained minister and missions director of The Jesus Christ Evangelistic Team, Pat has sung, preached and taught while on missions in the Philippines, China, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Hong Kong, Italy, Holland, Romania, France and the USA.

Affectionately known to many in the gift basket business as 'Rev. Pat', her joy for life and sparkling personality is contagious and an inspiration to all who have the privilege of knowing her. Gifts of Excellence by A Virtuous Woman has evolved into a successful mix of gift services and unique faith inspired gifts.

**Pat Carroll**  
**Gifts of Excellence**

**Years in Business:** 6

**Type of Business:** Gift Services

**Why did you start your own business?**

When I started making handcrafted jewelry in 1992, I treated it like a business. I did craft shows on the weekends. I got hooked up with a merchant account, a credit card machine and a state license. I didn't make any money with the jewelry or the handcrafted "Angels with an Attitude" that followed. My personality was not a good fit with the craft show circuit, so I was not satisfied when I didn't make the sales. I needed an outlet for my creative side, and upon receiving the "golden handshake" in 2000, and since I was too "mature" to start a singing career, I backed into the gift basket business. It allows for creative expression and satisfaction of a desire for ROI, commensurate with your level of dedication and commitment.

**What are you passionate about in your work?**

The challenge of designing or supplying a gift that will have a positive impact on at least two other people (giver/receiver) while being profitable. I don't want to sound like a mercenary, but it's in the gene pool - we like to turn a profit.

**What is your dream for the future of your company?**

My greatest dream would be to manage a gift basket business running out of a small-moderately sized warehouse with an office and reception area. Right now, I really, really love working out of my house and I find it hard to visualize doing the 9-5 bit again.

**What are your biggest strengths and talents?**

Resilience, determination, integrity. I have a business sense and logical mind (+30 years on the information systems highway). At the same time, I care about ministering to people, singing, teaching Bible school.

**What is the biggest challenge you face in your work and how are you working to overcome it?**

I just bought a bunch of ceramic music boxes to convert into gifts.

One of the tunes is titled "I Believe I Can Fly" -

*I believe I can fly; I believe I can touch the sky  
I think about it every night and day; Spread my wings and fly away  
I believe I can soar; I see me running through that open door  
I believe I can fly; I believe I can fly; I believe I can fly*

My biggest challenge is to continue to believe that I can fly, even when the orders don't pour in, or someone says nasty untruths about me or questions my integrity. I believe there's a divine reward for diligence, for staying focused and being a person of your word, regardless of the circumstances. I will not let other people determine my attitude. I believe I can fly.

**What words of wisdom and encouragement can you pass on to other entrepreneurs?**

Well, if wisdom is understood to mean knowing how to apply information to achieve a desired outcome, then I don't know if I qualify to express wisdom. Someone told me to "pick your battles". I think that's good advice. Many times I choose to zip my lip and hold my peace, especially if I sense that what I may say will only fan the flames. I'd much rather channel that energy into making a beautiful gift basket, designing a marketing campaign or getting caught up on paperwork. On the business side, my advice is to develop a good business plan and review it on a regular basis with someone who will ask the hard questions. Your vision is your vision, and no one will see it the way you do. However, that doesn't mean that it is infallible. Have an accountability partner/support system that has the ability to see things with a critical eye, while keeping your self-esteem intact.

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