



Dynamic Duos

{ BY LISA HORN, CAS }

By combining business with pleasure, these couples have found success in the office and at home.

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Working with your spouse can be a blessing ... and a curse. But it is possible to have a thriving business and be happily married—at the same time.

Want proof? *Promotional Consultant* interviewed eight couples to learn how they work the business, what obstacles they have overcome and what advice they can give to other husband-wife duos trying to make their way together in the promotional products industry. Here's a little insight into what makes a dynamic duo.

Dan Goo, CAS, & Judy Goo, CAS
D & J Specialties, Inc.
UPIC: DJSPEC
Honolulu, Hawaii

Dan and Judy Goo not only have passion for each other but also for helping others create a lasting impression for their brands. It can easily be seen when they speak to local university students about their business, D & J Specialties, and the promotional products industry. “Recently, one of the students told us that our business sounded too good to be true,” Judy says. “He said he could tell we work together well because we spoke in tandem.”

When the couple started the company in 1993, they instinctively gravitated toward the things they were naturally good at doing—Dan is active at client development and sales, and Judy excels at the details with her strong business background. “Throughout the years, we’ve each developed areas of expertise, and we rely heavily on each other in these specific areas,” Judy explains. “Since we are committed to one another in business and in our personal lives, we trust each other to do what’s best for our business.”

What advice do these two, who will celebrate their 21st anniversary in May, have for other couples considering going into business together? “I would recommend that they take a look at how they work together in their



Dan Goo, CAS & Judy Goo, CAS

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home life,” Dan says. “If they can share home duties such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of the kids and finances, then the chances of success in working together in any business will be greatly increased.”

Jay & Laura Ward
Ward Promotional Marketing Solutions, Inc.
UPIC: WardP341
Modesto, California

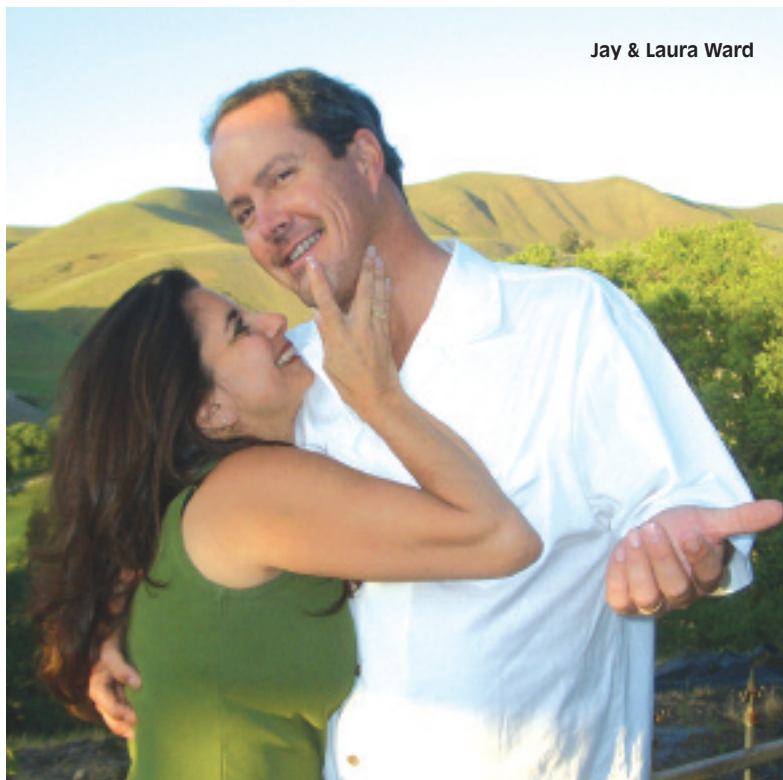
Laura Ward was having much success as an independent rep for a large distributor, but after 12 years, she wanted to strike out on her own. To ensure the success of her new company, Ward Promotional Marketing Solutions, Laura was interested in having a business partner. Her husband, Jay, who owned a country club golf professional business for 14 years, was an ideal match. “Jay knew

business and I knew sales, and we both were very hungry to start our new venture together,” Laura says.

Eight years later, the couple has not only grown the company but also their marriage. “Believe it or not, I feel that Jay and I have become closer by having our business together,” Laura says. “As a couple, you never really get to know what the other person’s strengths or weaknesses are when you have separate work lives. I have learned so much about Jay, and I love and respect him more each day.”

But transitioning from working independently to having a business partner has been a big change for each of them. “In my past career, I was totally in charge of my business,” says Jay. “Things happened my way; I was the expert. It’s been a big change to work together as a partner, equal in the business. I have gained a new appreciation for all the skills Laura brings to the table. If we didn’t work together, like most couples, I would not have the opportunity to really see how gifted she is. Due to our partnership during business hours, we have grown personally as well as professionally.”

While the couple works together, they actually don’t spend as much time together during the day as one might think. “A business isn’t built by driving to appointments together or sharing lunches,” says Laura. “We have learned that we each have roles to play, and trusting that we will each accomplish what needs to be done is vital. A marriage is built on trust and reliance on each other, and so is this business. We are happy to say that we are blessed to be good at both.”



Jay & Laura Ward

David & Carroll Goggin, CAS
DBG Promotions
UPIC: DBGPROMO
Winter Park, Florida

Just a year into their marriage, David and Carroll Goggin moved to Chicago only to find out David’s new job didn’t materialize. “Necessity is the mother of invention,” he says. “So Carroll and I started DBG Promotions with two phones, two desks, a file cabinet and a thermal fax machine.”

Seventeen years later, the business—and the couple—are going strong. They attribute their success in part to their complementary strengths. A self-described financial, Carroll focuses on accounting and organizational systems as well as consistently looking at ways to run the business more efficiently while holding customer satisfaction as the benchmark. On the other hand, David's strengths lie in sales and driving the business.

But, both David and Carroll are Type A personalities, and learning to work together has been challenging at times. "I wake up each morning in a full run, and David is not necessarily on the same page as me at 5:45 am," says Carroll. "The day goes much better when I don't jump right into business mode with David when he wakes up."



David & Carroll Goggin, CAS

David agrees communication is key. "We have learned to 'inform' the other of decisions regarding our individual areas of responsibility and trust each other's judgment," David says. "This has taught us

which decisions are 'hers,' 'mine' and 'ours.'"

For couples thinking about going into business together, Carroll says to make sure your personal life is in good order. "A dysfunctional relationship will lead to a dysfunctional business," she says

David recommends operating as peers. "Neither person can be subservient in the office and not have it affect the home," he says. "Additionally, clearly understand your own strengths and weaknesses and recognize your spouse's contributions and successes. Neither of us could not have done it without the other, and we have great respect for each other's talents and abilities."

Terry & Marilyn Peak

Peak Expectations

UPIC: Peak

San Jacinto, California

Terry and Marilyn Peak worked more than 20 years together at a family-owned manufacturing company. But when owners sold the business in 2002, the two were out of work. After taking some time off to travel, the Peaks each found new jobs, but they weren't satisfied.

Terry & Marilyn Peak



"Working apart from each other was not as fulfilling or fun as being together," Marilyn says. "We had a desire to make a small product that was motivational in nature, and while we were doing our research we found the wonderful, vast world of promotional products."

In April 2007, Peak Expectations was born. Marilyn puts her creative talent to work developing promotional ideas, and Terry does the sales, marketing, product research and networking. The administration and accounting come easy, as that was what the couple did in their former careers. But the big obstacles were lack of

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computer knowledge and not having a sales background. “We overcame this by hiring a sales coach that we have been working with for the past year,” Marilyn says. “Plus, we’ve taken advantage of all education courses and are both working toward our CAS designation.”

In addition to developing listening skills, Terry says the biggest lesson he has learned is to have—and follow—a plan. “Develop a plan that details who will handle each aspect of your business,” he recommends. “Then, each of you must let the other do the job.”

Ron & Janet Baellow
Bright Ideas, LLC
UPIC: BRTIDEAS
Charlottesville, Virginia

While Ron and Janet Baellow have worked hard the last 10 years to keep the creativity popping at Bright Ideas, they know how to do it with a sense of humor. “Ron is a master at being extremely productive and successful yet able to add that element of humor when



Ron & Janet Baellow

appropriate,” Janet says. “He represents to everyone in the office that we work hard and we work smart, but we can also add a jolt of levity to make the work environment pleasant. This is our company’s personality, and it trickles down to our customers as well.”

Case in point. In addition to Ron managing the sales staff and Janet running the inside operations, Ron says the couple does a little bit of everything as needed, “including fixing the plumbing and computers, emptying the trash, running loads of outdated catalogs to the recycling center and chasing down the UPS driver.”

But the couple, who has been married for 25 years, is serious about one thing: how they treat each other.

“When something goes wrong, it can be easier to lose your cool with your spouse than with anyone else in the office. So, we’ve both learned that treating each other with the same level of professionalism and patience that we treat anyone else is very important.” —RON BAELOW

“You would think it’s easier to be civil to your spouse than to others in the work environment because she is your spouse,” Ron says. “But when something goes wrong, it can be easier to lose your cool with your spouse than with anyone else in the office. So, we’ve both learned that treating each other with the same level of professionalism and patience that we treat anyone else is very important.”

Like many business owners, the Baellows struggle with finding time to get away from the office. “Some couples may think that since they’re in the office together that they are being ‘together,’” Janet says. “But, you really need to get away from the office and act like a married couple rather than like co-workers when possible. It was (and still is to a certain extent) hard for both of us to be gone for any extended period. But, we now have several longtime staff members who we trust completely when we are gone. By treating our staff extremely well, we have built a loyal team that works well together and who feel a true ownership in the company.”



Bob & Manita Bartels

“Business is just business, and family is more important than business. We are employees when at work, and family when at home. But if the business becomes a strain on your relationship, get out of the business and find something else.”—BOB BARTELS

Bob & Manita Bartels
The Calvert Company, Inc.
 UPIC: CALVERT
 Orange, California

Bob and Manita Bartels were expecting their second child when they moved from Illinois to California in 1987. While they had owned some restaurants in Illinois, they wanted to leave the food business behind but were unsure what to do next. When Manita’s sister, an office manager for a promotional products company, introduced them to this industry, the couple was intrigued. “We thought it sounded like a great business—virtually no employees, something for everyone and at least one day a week off, preferably Sundays,” Manita says.

The couple founded The Calvert Company, with Bob focusing on selling and Manita processing the orders, handling the sales reps and managing the website. But they were mindful about balancing the growing business with their growing family. “The main obstacle was making sure we had time with the kids,” Manita explains. “Bob always came in early and left in time to pick up the boys and take them to baseball or hockey practice (he was the coach). And I always took them to school and did the field trips.”

Not allowing the line between business and family to blur has allowed the Bartels to keep things in perspective. “It’s important to separate your emotions and priorities,” Bob says. “Business is just business, and family is more important than business. We are employees when at work, and family when at home. But if the business becomes a strain on your relationship, get out of the business and find something else.”

Arthur & Mady Jablon
Raye Limited, Inc.
 UPIC: RAYELTD
 Calabasas, California

When Arthur and Mady Jablon founded Raye Limited 38 years ago, they ran the business from home so they could raise their three young children. But home-



Arthur & Mady Jablon

based businesses were viewed much differently then than they are today.

“In the early 1970s, suppliers looked upon distributors that operated out of their home in a negative manner,” Arthur says. “We overcame this obstacle by developing a reputation that if a factory performed its fulfillment of our order in a timely manner, it would receive not only our appreciation but, more importantly, our prompt payment.”

In addition to striving to build a good name in business and the community, the Jablons say another key to their success is a clear division of responsibilities. Arthur handles sales and client relations as well as factory negotiations,

whereas Mady takes care of order processing and general bookkeeping. “We have always enjoyed each other’s company, and working together 24/7 has not diminished this,” says Mady. “While we have a definite division of responsibility, each of us must be able to do the other’s job in case of an emergency.”

But it’s not all work for this couple, who has been married 42 years. Time away from the business is essential for both the company and the marriage to thrive.



Write It Down

You know the old adage, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.”

Deborah A. Osgood, co-founder and chief knowledge officer of Exeter, New Hampshire-based Knowledge Institute, Inc., believes this is especially true for couples in business together.

“Writing a business plan not only provides an opportunity for examining and reexamining why and how you want to work together, but it also provides the critical documentation necessary for guiding your shared success over time as you work together,” says Osgood, who was named 2008 Outstanding Woman in Business by the *New Hampshire Business Review*. “Using time management tools to track and compare progress against this plan over time and on a routine basis allows couples to focus on the business issues and not the personal ones.”

Stephen Balzac, adjunct professor of industrial/organizational psychology and president of Stow, Massachusetts-based 7 Steps Ahead, LLC, says it is essential for couples to map out what they hope to gain by working together, how they’ll know if they’re succeeding and how they’ll know if they’re failing.

“They should make a point of having at least once-a-week check-ins with one another to make sure they’re on track,” he recommends. “They should have a plan for how they’ll resolve disagreements and manage family responsibilities. And from the beginning, they should both feel comfortable with the attitude that if it doesn’t work, it’s not the fault of one or the other, but of the plan.” —LISA HORN, CAS

“Because we work together, we can plan our vacations around one schedule, which has permitted us to extensively travel abroad,” Mady says. “From the beginning of our business to this day, we believe that even though business stops when we are gone on vacation, we must recharge our batteries on a regular basis.”

Steve & Yvette Widdicombe

Jack Nadel International

UPIC: NADELINC

Palo Alto, California

Steve and Yvette Widdicombe have a different working situation than the other couples, as they are both vice presidents and serve on the board of directors for Jack Nadel International. And, they each have their own set of clients and run their businesses separately.

While they have independence in their respective roles, they still work together in the office, which can result in many of the same challenges other couples face. Their strategy for success revolves around not talking about business at home.



Steve & Yvette Widdicombe

“Too much business talk is too much,” Yvette says. “When there is stress at work, bringing it home only causes more stress. We really try and keep work at work, and have our home life be just that.”

Their approach works. Yvette joined JNI fresh out of college 23 years ago, and Steve joined the organization a year later. And in more than two decades of working together, the couple says there has never been competition between them. “There is never a sense of ‘you did better,’” Steve says. “We each hope the other person out sells the other.”

In fact, there’s more of a sense of teamwork because they each understand what the other person’s day has been like. “You get to share the good and be comforted when it is bad,” says Yvette.

It’s this understanding of the ups and downs and stresses of what happens every day that has brought the couple closer. Steve says, “Being able to spend as much time together as possible is the most rewarding for me.” **PC**

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