

# Advice from Canadian entrepreneurs who have opened their own businesses

*Last Updated: Thursday, October 15, 2009 / 8:45 AM ET*

By Sheila Whyte, [CBC News](#)

## Linda Pullen

*Linda Pullen says entrepreneurs should learn to stick to a schedule.* Linda Pullen spends many of her days enveloped in the smell of chocolate. She and her mother, Charlotte Vanderheyden, are chocolatiers who co-own Charlinda Belgian Chocolates in Stouffville, Ont., a small community northeast of Toronto.

Pullen left the corporate world about 15 years ago to go into business full-time. Despite the long hours, the uneven income and her Jill-of-all trades days, she says she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I love being my own boss," she says. And the business fits with having two young children.



The manufacturing is done in a converted bowling alley. The front half is the store. The chocolatiers import the raw chocolate from Belgium and make sumptuous handmade treats on the spot from a family recipe. They're sold locally and to corporate customers.

### Tip 1: Make sure there's a market

It was Pullen's mother, Charlotte, who identified a niche for handmade chocolates back in 1991. She noticed there were very few suppliers, but interest in good chocolate was growing. The shop is off the beaten track, but located in a scenic area, and there's no local

competition for this European specialty.

### Tip 2: Manage your time well

You need a plan so that important things get done on the right days. When you make time for things formally, you're more likely to stick to the schedule and get things done.

"In my business, I manufacture, I package and I sell. Sometimes I don't have enough time to follow up as quickly as I'd like," Pullen says.

### Tip 3: Quality counts

Pullen says selling a product that she believes is top notch is a confidence-builder, because quality encourages word-of-mouth advertising. This is especially important if you can't afford a big marketing budget — and it holds true for just about any product.

"People are concerned about the chemicals and preservatives in food. If you're going to treat yourself to a sweet, make sure the quality is good!"