

The Scratching Problem

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ABSTRACT

This case illustrates several dilemmas faced by a founder of a new clothing start-up, Joan. The idea of starting a clothing venture specializing in comfort apparel was born due to a frequent problem encountered by her when buying clothes for her skin sensitive son. Despite having some working experience as marketing manager and research analyst, Joan found herself grappling with a number of key decision-making problems in her business venture – ranging from financing, vendor and material selection as well as human resources. This case describes challenges and problems of a business start-up at the inception or infancy stage of the business. Therefore, it is designed to provide understanding of the process of starting a business start-up and stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving skills related to entrepreneurial activities.

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It was in early May 2016. Joan, a full-time research analyst who worked in a global business consultancy firm in Johor, wanted to ask some opinion from Isaac, a business consultant, who joined the company at the same time with her in early 2015, and has been one of her close friends since. Joan invited Isaac to a local café near their office for lunch.

Joan : I am thinking of starting my own business.

Isaac : What happened?

Joan : You know about my son, Adam and his condition, right? I'm tired of looking around when shopping for his clothes. Of course, I know that the clothes suitable for children with skin condition like Adam are expensive, but then when I find one, most of the time, I do not like their design! I think if I can just design my own children's clothing label, then I could solve my problem and other people's problem as well.

Isaac : Yes. I understand your frustration. But it is not easy to run a business. You could end up creating more problems than you have now.

Joan : Yes, I am aware of that. But you never know until you do it.

Isaac : So, are you planning to quit your job?

Joan : No, not now. I am thinking to start the business on a part-time basis. When I feel confident that the business is sustainable, I will quit and concentrate on it.

Isaac : That is a good call. But, if you are running your business part-time, are you sure you can juggle your day-time job, being a wife and mother, and being a business owner? Plus, you don't have any experience running a business, do you?