



P2C Testimonials

Rachel Mielke (Owner – Hillberg & Berk) 2008 Progress2Capital Finalist

Rachel Mielke is the owner of Hillberg & Berk, which designs high-end jewellery targeted at sophisticated and refined women. Rachel finished in 2nd place in the 2008 competition, winning a prize package totaling \$15,000. We caught up with Rachel to talk about her experience with the Progress2Capital Business Planning Competition.

1) What does your company do?

Hillberg & Berk designs, manufactures, wholesales and retails high end designer jewellery. We mainly use materials such as semi-precious gemstones, Swarovski crystal, Sterling Silver and Fresh Water Pearls in our designs.

2) What made you decide to enter the contest? Did you have any apprehension initially?

I had heard about the contest during it's first year and finally decided to enter this year as I felt my business was really at the stage where it could benefit best from the competition. The only apprehension I had about entering was the knowledge that I was finally going to have to complete a comprehensive business plan, but this was also the reason that I decided to enter the competition!

3) How did the Progress2Capital competition help you?

There were certainly many ways the competition helped me. First it gave me the necessary incentive to start writing my business plan, P2C also offered a business planning boot camp which was great. After the business planning stage of the competition was complete next was the actual "pitch" which was extremely helpful for me personally because days after doing my limo pitch, I had to pitch my idea to the dragon's on CBC's Dragons' Den. P2C was instrumental in helping me be prepared for this experience. In the end Hillberg & Berk received second place in the competition. My prize included \$5000 cash which furnished my new office and \$5000 in legal and accounting services which has come in very useful in my first year as a corporation. P2C also hooked me up with the most amazing business lawyer, Dave Brundige. Dave has just been incredible to work with and I am so glad that I got the opportunity to meet him through P2C!

4) What was your favourite part of the competition? What aspect of the competition helped your business the most?

The business planning process was definitely the most helpful part of the process although that can be a little dry at times for a entrepreneur so for the me the best part of the P2C competition was definitely the formal presentation, for me that is where all of the hard work came finally came together. There is also a lot of great publicity that comes along with being a part of the P2C competition, especially for new companies that are trying to get the word out about their product.

5) How has business been since the end of the competition? What are your plans for the future?

When I entered the P2C competition I worked from my home and had 1 employee. By the end of the competition I already hired two more employees and was growing rapidly. Since then I have moved into an office and now have 8 employees and I am moving my business into international markets. Over the next 5 years we plan to enter the US, European and Asian markets and plan to become a preferred name in the high-end fashion jewellery industry.