

LIFE@WORK

Couple make a life of veils

A few eBay sales became a thriving online business

WEST CHESTER TWP. – Internet entrepreneur Rebecca Walker and her husband, Robert, wear many hats – or veils, as the case may be.

The West Chester Township couple work at least 12 hours a day running veilshop.com, which offers 90,000 varieties of veils, plus custom orders, tiaras and accessories that run from \$30 to several hundred dollars.



Stephanie Romine

They've designed the Web site from scratch, with a redesign to be unveiled by month's end. They built a set in their basement so they could film video tutorials. Rebecca designs the veils – though demand prompted her to hire a manufacturer in California – and is working on a line of jewelry and accessories. Robert films and edits those tutorials and shoots photos for the Web site. He handles the administrative tasks; she does all the customer service.

"We're the ultimate DIY-ers," said Rebecca.

A former high school biology teacher and physical therapist, Rebecca sold nine handmade wedding veils online after her sister-in-law introduced her to eBay late in 1999.

After bidding wars ensued, Rebecca posted her e-mail address and offered to make custom veils.

By May 2000, she had so many orders that she had to leave her job as a physical therapist. She took her first order on the site on July 4, 2000, and by January 2001, Robert had quit his job, too.

"I like to say we're 'retired' physical



The Enquirer/Leigh Taylor

Rebecca Walker, an Internet entrepreneur, founded veilshop.com in 2000 with her husband, Robert. She performs the customer service while Robert handles administrative matters.

therapists," said Robert, who like Rebecca is 47.

The week he left his job, there was more news: "I found out that I was pregnant, at 40," said Rebecca, a Fairfield native.

They moved from Seattle to Ohio to work on the business and be closer to Rebecca's family. Her mother, aunt and uncle – whom she calls "the hardest working people you can get" – now work part time for the site.

The Walkers credit their success to luck and timing, along with a no-hassle return policy, so brides can try on veils and get opinions before making a final choice.

Surprisingly, Rebecca claims to have few if any "Bridezilla" stories, though she does get a large amount of business from "crisis brides" who have waited until the last minute to buy a veil. And destruction from cats, she said, helps business, too.

Rebecca understands how stressful wedding planning can be.

While making her own wedding dress in 1996, Rebecca pricked her finger and left a smudge of blood. She had to hand bead the entire bodice to hide the flaw.

And yes, she made her veil. It had "a lettuce edge – a rippled edge – and pearls, lots of pearls," she said.

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