

Linda Fritz and CRESBI

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A lot of us dream of owning and running our own business. But, how many of us actually do it? As Linda indicates, it is emotionally and financially draining. It's like giving your last drop of blood and somehow finding the strength and energy to continue.

Linda Fritz did it and IS doing it. She created the concept, did the research, designed the product, made the financial investment and made the product available for sale. Now she is working on marketing and growing her business.

As women, we are bright people. We are creative; we are divine. Open yourself up to what your heart is saying and get moving. Linda, thank you for sharing your story! – WMTS

It's been pretty challenging with all the things one has to do to get a business going, financially and emotionally. But here's my story:

After putting myself through college and working for twelve years as an engineer in the automotive industry in Detroit Michigan, I wanted to make a bigger difference in the lives of children. I always volunteered but desired to reach more kids with a positive message in my entertaining style. I felt TV was the way to do this. I went to broadcast school at night and created a kid's TV show. In the process of spending my savings on video equipment and quitting my job to get the show on the air, God played a little trick on me and my husband of ten years and we had our first child. Since I was the one already home, for the next 18 years I was the mom/wife/homemaker with a video business on the side.



It was weird for me because I always saw myself as running a company or the country – not just a household – and it felt like I gave up too much power in the relationship by staying home. I did however cherish that time with our child.

For the next 18 years, besides raising our daughter, I did a lot of volunteering and making enough money with the video business to buy things I thought were important. I also started growing edamame and sun sugar cherry tomatoes on a small scale. My secret hope was to someday bring these great foods to all the kids in Kentucky to help them eat healthier. And then in 2011 my daughter graduated and went happily off to college.

A big hole gaped in my chest where my heart had been. Now what? No gold watch. No job well done party. No marketable skills to get back into engineering. Even my video work didn't satisfy. I did love being outside though, expanding the edamame farm. That next year I was actually selling several hundred pounds of it while donating some to schools. I just hated all the cardboard boxes I had to use to transport it because I knew they'd get just get thrown away. And then I noticed the produce guys at the grocery store.

After interrogating the workers to show me who made them, I purchased a couple small collapsible crates like the ones they were using. They were great for delivering the edamame because I could reuse them and easily clean them. At the same time it was getting harder to get paper bags, which I used as weed control for the garden. I hated plastic bags since they were such a poor carrier and multiplied like rabbits in the pantry. When Kroger had a "design the reusable bag" contest I'd had enough – the reusable ones I'd tried weren't much better, why were they perpetuating this problem?! I drew up my concept of what it would be like to use crates like mine to grocery shop, noted that they were even more functional than paper bags because they stacked and submitted my entry.



I didn't win.

But I did start investigating what it would take to make my edamame crates a little less industrial so others could try them. I was told by three different men that they weren't interested in helping me because I wasn't Kroger, I didn't have \$200k, and what's wrong with plastic bags anyway? At 3:00 AM one morning I came across Alibaba.com and there were crates that were the perfect size and weight I was looking for! I designed a strap and a cooler to hold the few samples I was working with and many trials and tribulations later sunk my savings into a container-load of crates and custom hooks.

I gave these new little crate systems a name: CRESBI for Collapsible Reusable Environmentally-friendly Stackable Box Idea (pronounced kress bee). I love that they free shoppers from the mercy of a liberally-packing bagger, that precious fruit can no longer go free range under the car seat, and that they'll last forever. Plus they can be thrown in the dishwasher versus the farce of their "hand-wash in cold only, headed for a landfill" reusable bag counterparts.

The best part though is the time they save. Open up your CRESBI crates when you walk in the store, put your items in them with the barcodes up and have the checker use their handheld scanner to scan the items right in the crate. It truly is a better way to shop and I'm thrilled when I get feedback about how much women love their CRESBI crates. It's kind of ironic that the ones who are most excited about CRESBI crates when they see them though are kids. I've had ten year old boys say to their moms: "Mom, this is cool, you should buy this! Seriously, Mom, when do I ever get excited about grocery shopping!?"

I just love that people I'd never met took a leap of faith and ordered my product. Now that I know they love it, I want them to be able to share it a little more easily with others, especially for the holidays. And if people aren't afraid to make a positive connection with a checkout guy or gal and ask them to use their handheld scanners, it's amazing. The last time I went shopping I bought about 40 items – \$110 worth of stuff – and it took less than a minute to check out from the time I put the crates on the conveyer to the time I put them back in my cart because I had 3 of my crates with the products' barcodes up. The checker just looked at me with a smile and said, "Wow. We're done. That was cool."



Financially I did OK this first year with just the website out there (www.cresbi.com) and the few shows I've done but I still have a ways to go to get my investment back. I wish that I could lower the prices to make CRESBI crates more affordable to everyone but with Kroger considering them and a possible time on the Home Shopping Network I need to have margins of 40 – 55% to provide them just to break even.

My goals are to get on a TV show like HSN or Shark Tank (my audition tape I made is the first answer: <http://www.sunsugarfarms.com/pages/faq>), get my investment back and sell enough to hire more moms to help me with the business. Oh – and see that every home in America has a CRESBI crate. Why? Because they really do help people "make a better life" and they'll love them! I don't know if I'll do all that, in fact some days I'm afraid to get out of bed because I don't want to make cold calls! But I guess I'd rather die living and trying to help the world than live dying inside because I felt I missed out.

Thanks for letting me tell my story.

(Coupon code: **LOVE20** will save you 20% off your internet order through December.)

