

NEW VENTURE

## Multiplying success

Teacher wins contest, launches business

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If you won \$250,000 in cash and prizes in a national contest to launch a business, how would you spend it? That's been Jennifer Tuttle's mission in the last 18 months, since the teacher beat 11,000 entrants in the "Live Your Dream" contest sponsored by successful body trainer and entrepreneur Jake Steinfeld. She used the money, and the training provided by top business executives, to develop her Brain Party business, and its first product line: MathMosis, a learning system aimed at preschoolers and elementary kids to master multiplication. Jennifer, 32, is in the middle of a 3-year leave from L'Anse Creuse schools, and has to decide by next year whether she'll return to the classroom. She lives in Chesterfield Township with her husband, Ray, and children, Emmalyn, 4, and Joe, 2, who already are counting in multiples.

**Entering the contest:** Jennifer saw Jake interviewed on the Fox TV station about his "Live Your Dream" contest. On that day, which was the contest deadline day, Jennifer bought one of his books and wrote a contest essay.

**Her inspiration:** In eight years of teaching first- through third-graders, Jennifer had developed games and methods for kids to see patterns in multiplication. When a parent marveled at how well her second-grader had learned under Jennifer's tutelage, she asked Jennifer whether she had tips for letting the parent help her fifth-grader master multiplication. The parent, a learning consultant, was so impressed she asked Jennifer to teach a workshop on her methods. That's when Jennifer thought she had a marketable concept.

**Finalist crunch time:** When she was named a finalist in the contest, she showed up at a New York City interview with a portfolio describing how she would spend the money, a marketing plan, and research to back her product.

**What she won:** \$200,000 to develop her business, plus corporate jet service valued at \$50,000. Jennifer declined the corporate jet service, in favor of a cash settlement. She also attended a weeklong seminar in Florida at the American Management Association.

**Multiplication to music:** Jennifer's MathMosis Music CD teaches kids multiplication tables and number patterns through music. Jennifer recruited two kids from Atwood Elementary in Macomb Township to sing the songs, Matthew Buchanan and Chantelle Adkins.

**Business building blocks:** She used the phone book and the Internet to track down a recording studio to make her CD, to find musicians to develop the score and to find CD manufacturers.

**Her educational goal:** Because kids learn in different ways -- visually, analytically, musically and through movement -- she's developed math materials that connect with kids on a variety of levels.

**Her marketing goal:** She's pitching her teaching kits (\$199.95 each) to school districts and teacher organizations. For families and individuals, she's selling a CD (\$15.95) at [www.mathmosis.com](http://www.mathmosis.com). She wants to sell the 1,000 teaching kits in her basement by December.

**Did she spend all the money?** On the day she won, "I already had done the research on how much it would cost, and that we'd need every penny and then some," she says.

**Where the money went:** A huge chunk went to taxes. Jennifer paid herself about \$50,000 in salary to develop the products. (Otherwise, she would have had to return to teaching.) More than \$75,000 has gone to manufacturing the products, which include the CDs and teaching kits.

**Her office:** The kitchen table has served her well. Her products are in the basement, but it may be time to move to an off-site location.

**Lessons learned:** Got an idea? Get it trademarked and patented. The day Jennifer was announced as a national winner on TV was the day somebody else trademarked the name she intended to call her product. So Jennifer was forced to change her product's name from Multiplication Magic to MathMosis, which she thinks is better anyway.

**Invaluable -- and free -- help:** Jennifer used SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives Web site ([www.score.org](http://www.score.org)), where she was able to pair up with a retired lawyer and marketing agent. And it costs her nothing.

**What Jake wanted in a winner:** "I was looking for ... a boatload of passion and a can't quit attitude," he says. After he heard Jennifer's sales pitch, as he gathered the finalists in a Manhattan restaurant, "It was as clear as day. ... That's how easy it was for me" to pick Jennifer, he says.

**What Jake expects now:** "All I wanted was that you had to use the money to start the business. Once you become rich and famous, you don't forget me and you do it for somebody else."

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