



*Opportunity knocks, sometimes just a bit louder than others. This time the knock occurred on a day when Cynthia McKay's husband received a gift basket for his birthday. Although the thought was appreciated, McKay was most displeased with the quality and inflated cost of the basket. Frustrated with her unfulfilling job as an attorney, she realized that she could start a business herself, selling high quality gift baskets at an affordable price. After jotting down her business plan on the back of a cocktail napkin, she walked into her office the following day and left behind her law career FOREVER.*

McKay began her new venture inspired with the possibilities that lay ahead. She spent the next three months developing her product and brushing up on her business management skills. At the end of three months, her company, Le Gourmet Gift Basket, Inc. had already turned a profit, and McKay had found her new passion. This endeavor was not accomplished without adversity, however.

When McKay looked back and realized how difficult and time consuming the start-up process was, she knew that there must be other individuals that could benefit from her experience. "When starting my business, I would have paid any amount of money for a simple plan containing business, tax, legal and management advice," says McKay. "I figured other people could benefit from my experience, so I began the franchise-distributorship program to share that experience and success with others. Our program completely trains an individual to run a gift basket business from their home or a storefront."

From these small beginnings McKay has now sold over 310 distributorships throughout the United States and Canada. Her distributorship concept is a blend of the most favorable qualities of a franchise, distributorship and licensing program. "To be a true franchise, I found the necessary investments to begin at \$50,000 and the parent company would retain 2% of the monthly gross receipts. That seemed very complicated for everyone involved! My attempt was to develop something easier, not more complicated," says McKay.

McKay received her undergraduate degree from the University of Central Florida, her Masters Degree from the University of London, England, and her law degree from the University of Denver. She is listed in "Who's Who Among American Law Students." McKay is a member of the Small Business Administration, and was awarded the 1998 Women's Advocate of the Year for the State of Colorado, as well as the 1999 Entrepreneur of the Year. She feels that this honor is "the award of a lifetime!" McKay believes that receiving this award is at the heart and soul of what she has set out to accomplish for individuals with little or no resources. "There are so many creative, brilliant, driven individuals in the world, I just want for them what I was fortunate enough to achieve. Many people are truly limited to work at home either because of child care, parental obligations, health reasons or similar issues."

# **ACHIEVE** Success With Your Own Gift Basket Business Directly **FROM** **HOME!**

A PROFILE OF CYNTHIA MCKAY  
PRESIDENT/CEO OF  
LE GOURMET GIFT BASKET, INC.



"Our program is an altruistic one. Any accountant can recognize that manuals, research, updates, websites, referrals, and training all come at an expensive price, one that exceeds a \$3500 price tag. I guarantee that although we don't get rich off the sales of a distributorship, we now have 310 individuals who feel better about themselves and know that someone in Denver is watching out for them." McKay was uncertain how to price this business opportunity, so she looked back to when she was first starting out. "The law school loans, mortgages and the like prohibited me from exceeding a \$3500 investment realistically. Although my startup costs were much, much more, I could have comfortably afforded \$3500. Therefore, I felt that \$3500 was a fair price for what we have to offer."



In 1998, McKay wrote a book entitled, "The Business of Gift Baskets: A Guide for Survival." Her book has sold over a million copies, and she has gotten orders from as far away as Australia. "I'm very pleased to offer a well-rounded book which highlights a variety of pitfalls a new business owner can be aware of before the crisis hits," says McKay. Her book is not only about gift baskets, it is a multi-faceted manual that is used in college courses to teach students about the art of marketing and sales.

McKay is a nationally renowned speaker and advisor for many aspects of self-employment. "Take the challenge-it's worth it!" is her mantra. "There is no greater satisfaction than making a profit within months of starting your own business. My philosophy emphasizes the fact that security is found in self-employment," she says. "I've developed the practical economics of a home-based business so that profit is high, overhead is low, and for a self-employed individual, morale is great." McKay has appeared on CNN, Bloomberg Television, and Lifetime Television's New Attitudes program, the cover of Woman's World, and many other publications such as Entrepreneur, Home Business Opportunity, By Design, and The Wall Street Journal.

McKay is also a popular friend to entrepreneurs. She has a private consulting firm that caters to would-be entrepreneurs, often counseling them via the telephone to develop their ideas into a working business.

McKay counsels on PR issues, small business, etc., to help the small business person achieve their highest level of success. Many people feel that their business ideas can be turned into a franchise-distributorship program, and McKay lends the helping hand to make sure that it happens.

McKay's program specializes in the fact that the consumer is, in essence, purchasing a ready-made business. The research has already been done, vendor deals have been negotiated, the manual has been written, and the distributors receive on site training by McKay or one of her trainers. "This gives our distributors a stable beginning point at which to begin their businesses. Our company is special in that we have no royalty fees, no franchise fees, and constant support." McKay supplements the training by providing the business owners with her home phone number for emergencies-evenings or weekends. During the day, she can be found working in her office, an old restored Victorian in the heart of Denver, Colorado. "My services and knowledge are being sold and I must be accessible or there's no credibility. I take everyone's successes and difficulties very seriously, regardless of what line of work they are in."

Succeed they have. "I can't believe how well our distributors are doing. I thought by developing a realistic and manageable business program, we might see some success, but my first year offering the distributorship program brought the average individual revenues of over \$180,000.

That's fabulous for the first year of a home-based business! I am still in awe of this company's achievements, and I understand the need to simplify a life-changing transition from the security of an office job with the benefits of self-employment."

The future looks bright for McKay and her company. Each day the firm receives a few more distributors. "We're expanding internationally and we anticipate revenues to triple over the next six months. I'm excited about where the company is headed in the year 2000," she says. **For more info, call 1-800-93-gift-6 or go to [www.legift.com](http://www.legift.com).**

