

By Design

The Ultimate Magazine for Gift Basket Retailers

**The Business
of Gift Baskets**

**Marketing
Sports Baskets**

**Handling
Bereavement
With Care**



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Awards and Accomplishments:

While Cynthia strives for the success of her own company, her efforts to help others succeed in their ventures has won her honors, including Women in Business Advocate of the Year Award from the Small Business Administration for her accomplishments in the development of business opportunities for women. Cynthia has also received the American Association of University Women Trailblazer's Award for her accomplishments in business. Her educational background has given her a great deal of versatility as she lends a hand at this growing market. With studies in art at the University of London, England and a Doctorate Degree from the University of Denver College of Law, Cynthia is not only getting recognition for her abilities to be a leader in the industry, but she is showing others how to be a success.



Not knowing exactly how to price this business opportunity, McKay referred back to her experiences when 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 all we had to offer," says McKay.

The manual took two years to write, and the training regimen a year to perfect. Currently, McKay has 178 distributor/licencees across the country since the programs inception in December 1995. "I can't believe how well our people are doing. I thought by developing a realistic and manageable business program geared toward women, we might see some success, but my first year out with the program brought the average individual to revenues of over \$180,000. That's fabulous for the first year of a home-based business!"

This kind of success has not gone unnoticed. McKay has recently received the Trailblazers award which honors successful women in their field as stipulated by the American Association of University Women. McKay has also received what she deems to be "the award of a lifetime!" McKay has been named 1998 Women's Advocate of the Year for the State of Colorado. Chosen by the Small Business Association for this award, McKay feels this demonstrates the true meaning of what she has wanted to accomplish for women with limited means and/or no resources.

"There are so many creative, brilliant, driven women in this world, I just want for them what I was fortunate enough to achieve," says McKay. McKay also recognized something when developing her program over the years, "Many women are truly limited to work at home either because of child care, parental obligations, health reasons or

similar issues," says McKay. The program was modified to include sources for mail order gift baskets, and *Le Gourmet* was recently named one of the ten best mail order businesses to buy in the US by *Income Opportunities Magazine*.

"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, but I guarantee that although we don't get rich off the sales of a distributorship, we now have 178 individuals who feel better about themselves and know someone in Denver is watching out for them," she says.

McKay and her trainers fly nationwide on weekends, individually counseling and training each business owner. She supplements this with providing the business owner with her home phone number for emergencies – anytime, nights or weekends. During the day—

As the industry continues to grow, it's not too surprising to learn that many designers continue on to become advocates helping others to enter into this lucrative market. Cynthia McKay, President and CEO of **LeGourmet Gift Basket, Inc.** is just such a person. With her headquarters in Denver, Colorado, Le Gourmet has built an expansive clientele for retail gift baskets. Additionally, Le Gourmet offers a distributorship program featuring 280 distributorships nationwide. The tremendous growth for the program has led to an international expansion in 1999. Cynthia, a former attorney began the company with one retail location. She has become an expert in home based businesses, corporate negotiations and the empowerment of women. Cynthia has been featured on Lifetime Television's: "New Attitudes," Bloomberg's Small Business, CNN, Knowledge Television as well as numerous nationwide radio programs. She has graced the covers of **Woman's World Magazine** and **Business Opportunities Magazine**. Additionally, she is the author of a best selling book, *The Business of Gift Baskets: A Guide for Survival*.

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7am to 6pm—she works at her Denver office, an old restored Victorian. "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." McKay is actually referring to another dimension of her business, working as a consultant to small business owners. McKay counsels on PR issues, business, etc to help the small business person excel and achieve their highest level of success. McKay says, "believe me, 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 benefits to self-employment." McKay assures her clients, it can be done but diligence and an ability to focus are required criteria. McKay has a client in New Mexico who is striving to develop her business yet meet the demands of a home and family. "You can meet a nice balance but—an understanding family environment is crucial to your business success." McKay admits her husband of

5 years, attorney/consultant Paul Gomez is "an absolute prince" and also states her surprise that he was so willing to accommodate her demanding schedule. "A man who demonstrates a strong will and great self confidence will not be threatened by your success, a true partner will be inspired by your drive," says McKay.

Other than a bad relationship, McKay also recognized low self-esteem as another factor prohibiting success when venturing into self-employment. "I actually had a female attorney at one law firm try to demean my abilities on a daily basis. The problem was not with me, and women need to follow their own dreams regardless of others opinions."

McKay has developed an interest through her book, "The Business of Gift Baskets: A Guide for Survival". "I was shocked when someone wrote from Australia requesting the book. 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," adds McKay.

Website:

www.legift.com

Favorite Quote:

"Have you ever thought of another line of work?" This from a senior partner at her law firm – she says, "I never looked back!"

Best Advice:

"Do whatever you have to do to be happy".

Worst Advice:

"Don't give up the security of your law firm job".

Mentor:

"My father. He gave me wisdom, a strong business sense, tenacity and a clear insight into life on a daily basis."

Favorite Past Time:

Work, golf, water skiing and work!

Words of Wisdom to Share:

If you are going to work at anything 8 to 17 hours as I do, make sure you like what you're doing. Don't look at your life 20 years from now and wonder if you should have tried another direction. Invest in your own accomplishments.