



Turning a new page

Bisson Barcelona is focused on literary promotions

By Michael McCord, *Seacoast Ventures*—Published: January 2007

After working elbow-to-elbow for the past six months in the playroom and on the dining room table of Traci Bisson's Barrington house, the growing employee cadre at the literary-focused public relations firm Bisson Barcelona can finally stretch out, courtesy of a new office along Route 125—which happens to be close to the school bus stop for her older son.

"We're able to stop sharing phones and computers," Bisson said of her staff of local public relations stalwarts—Donna Marsh, Shannon Hill (formerly of the Women's Business Center), Marci Hait (formerly editor of *The York Weekly* in York, Maine), Allison McKay, and Cheryl Adams.

The six-year-old firm is the largest literary agency in New Hampshire. It specializes in publicity and image management services for authors and entrepreneurs.

The firm began as a two-person shop with a roster of freelance publicists in support. In the past two years, however, Bisson has added staff to handle an increasing work load that is the fruit of slow and deliberate local and national cultivation—and debunked conventional wisdom that a literary agency needed to be located in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles.

Bisson, 36, believes the company is poised to grow due to its focus on a niche, under-served market—authors who know their own craft but are often clueless about creating buzz for their products.

"People don't think of New Hampshire as a good place for us to be located but our prospect resources are unlimited," she said.

Bisson Barcelona's clients include the Peterborough-based national children's magazine, Moo-Cow Fan Club, Portsmouth author Judy Ringer, and popular New Hampshire magician BJ Hickman.

SV: What's the best part of being an entrepreneur?

BISSON: It's an exciting venture every day with unlimited things to do and explore. I need to do this because I make a terrible employee.

SV: What's your strength?

BISSON: I'm a visionary, also interested in what's around the corner. I'm also not afraid of innovation and I want us to offer the market the latest in new technologies and ideas.

SV: What have you learned along the way?

BISSON: I was concerned that as an employer I might not be good at managing people but I've found that a few mother-learned tactics work well.

I've also been happy to find that there is a tremendous amount of talent here. I kept hearing you can't find the right kind of people for this business and you need to bring them in from outside of the state.

SV: What inspires you?

BISSON: I have a number of inspirational resources. My family has encouraged and given me the ability to go out and chase these crazy dreams. My employees inspire me. They took big risks to quit stable jobs and jump into the nitty-gritty of this first year. I owe them so much.

SV: What's your best advice for a budding entrepreneur?

BISSON: Don't be afraid of fear. There are a lot of people wondering whether to take the leap and they are afraid. I believe fear is a good thing. Let fear drive you and be a motivator. If you're not afraid, it won't be easy to succeed.

SV: What's one of the company's main strengths?

BISSON: Our goal is to help our authors develop their own personal brand. We help them understand being an author is being a small business and many of them have not stepped into this market.

I like the one-on-one, personable interactions we have that establish trust and honesty. If you don't pay attention to the human relations aspects, you can't succeed.

SV: What's a goal that people might be surprised to hear about?

BISSON: I want Bisson Barcelona to be known as one of the top employers and best places to work for in the state. We already offer some of the best benefit packages and I want them (the employees) to take more responsibility to lead the company to our next stage. ■



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