



Success Magazine: How do you define Success?

Patti Garrand: Success is being able to balance your family, friends and your business, while doing your absolute best each day. It is that feeling of going home at night knowing that you have made a difference. Always strive for success; never settle, for you should never stop trying to make things better!

SM: You were working for Americade prior to opening TreePaad. Was becoming an entrepreneur an easy transition for you?

PG: Absolutely. Working at Americade taught us both to work very hard. We constantly were faced with elements like unpredictable weather conditions, and the ever changing economy. It taught us to be flexible, rethink things, and be able to adjust at the drop of a hat.

SM: What prompted your decision to go out on your own and open a business?

PG: We are sister-in-laws, but as close as sisters, and we wanted to start something that we could pass on to our children. We were never afraid of hard work, and figured if we worked hard enough we would have a great place for our children to work, and be proud of. We wanted a business where our children were able to be with us, and that could also be flexible enough for us to be able to spend time with them.

SM: Why TreePaad? Where did you get the idea to open a family entertainment center?

PG: Our idea didn't start out as a family entertainment center, it sort of evolved into one. TreePaad initially started out as an educational children's playhouse, with the ability to hold birthday parties. The concept itself took 4 years

to come full circle. We attended many shows, traveled all over to look at other entertainment venues, and then sat down with our husbands to hash out what TreePaad would finally be. We threw all of the possibilities out on the table, keeping our budget in mind, eliminated options until the final options were left. From there we worked on layout and concept. Our goal was to create a place where a family could play together, as well as hosting the best birthday parties that this area has ever seen.

SM: Did you have a sales or marketing plan?

PG: We have a sales, marketing and business plan, which we continually tweak. You've heard of the statement "the best laid plans of mice and men." That is a perfect synopsis for our plans. We planned, but didn't plan on going over budget on our startup; therefore it affected our other plans. We have since corrected that, but have learned that a plan is a course, and on that course you must be able to adjust.

SM: How did you fund this new Venture?

PG: Funding for this venture was interesting. We went to several banks, some of which laughed or walked out. We tried finding angel investors, but they felt it was too high of a risk. We basically hit a lot of brick walls along the way. Finally, we met a business consultant named John Crawford, who put us in touch with the Warren County EDC, and the Warren County LDC. They both loved our ideas and set out to see how they could help bring this concept to Glens Falls. The paperwork was astronomical, but with help we made it through. We ended up with what one might call "creative financing." We had to completely drain our pensions, and put our houses up as collateral for the bank to even consider us, but once we swallowed that decision, the pieces started to fall into place. We qualified for the Empire Zone from the WC EDC, then Keybank stepped up to the plate helping us tremendously with an SBA loan package, WC LDC filled in the remainder with a GAP loan and then, when we came up short, our accountant came up with some people willing to loan us the additional funds.

SM: What was the most challenging aspect of your initial start up?

PG: Our most challenging aspect was definitely the building process. We thought it was the paperwork for the loan until we started physically putting the project together. We were excited to finally see our hard work starting to take shape, but we had no idea how much work was still ahead of us. We spent everyday at the site, answering questions, modifying our layout for things that didn't work, or for options that would save money. We painted almost everything ourselves...all 64 gallons of paint that you see on the walls today. Timing is everything in construction and we had a wonderful contractor who held our hands the entire way.

SM: What types of activities do you offer?

PG: TreePaad offers FUN! We have Fort Ballocity, which is an interactive play ground, Lazer Tag, Rock Climbing, Arcade, Jumpshot (trampoline basketball), and a Fluff 'N Stuff Center where you can make your own stuffed animals. All of the activities are 100% adult friendly. What does that mean? Adults can go on anything right along with their children. We didn't want adults to feel like they could only watch their children have fun – we wanted them to be a part of the fun.

SM: Do you do birthday parties?

PG: Yes, we definitely do birthday parties. Our parties are what makes TreePaad so much fun and unique. They are high energy, always changing, and always fun. In fact, TreePaad recently won Best Creative Party Package (<http://www.ialei.org/goldentokenaward.aspx>) from IALEI, and the Best Birthday Parties in the Region by the Post Star. What an honor to be voted best by the industry that you're in and then by your customers. We proudly display all of these awards in our entrance, and do everything we can to uphold our customers expectations. If you have ever been to a TreePaad Birthday Party you know it is total excitement from start to finish. Our coaches and team members love their jobs and it shows.



SM: What age group do you target at TreePaad?

PG: We don't really target any age group – our main focus is on the family unit. Our ideal group is a family. If we had to choose an age group, I would say 5 to 13.

SM: What is the most rewarding aspect of opening your own business?

PG: The most rewarding, is the feeling of making a difference in our community. We are able to do benefits to raise money, special events, field trips, and group events. We also enjoy donating to the area schools. One of the most rewarding feelings is being out somewhere and having a child get so excited, pointing at you and pulling at his mom's sleeve saying "mom, she is from the TreePaad!" The excitement that you get from that child's eyes is pretty awesome and truly rewarding. It gives you all of the push that you need to continue striving.

SM: What are your goals for the future of TreePaad? Do you have plans for creating a franchise?

PG: Our goals for TreePaad are to be able to expand and offer new and exciting parties, as well as some new entertainment options. We have a lot of ideas stirring up and we can't wait to unveil them. We are constantly asked, "Is this a franchise?" This made us start thinking about it, but no, we are not going to franchise at this time. However, we have decided to license. It is a great alternative to franchising as they are not tied to us forever but have the benefit of using a proven name and formula to get started.

SM: What characteristic do you attribute to your success?

PG: We are unique. We offer different types of amusements than anyone in the area. We also have an awesome staff, which I accredit to my partner's (Candy) ability to bring out

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the enthusiasm in them, along with her unique training program. If I had to choose any one characteristic, I would have to say our staff. They are absolutely #1.

SM: What is unique about TreePaad that you would like people to know?

PG: We would like people to know that we are not a franchise. We came up with the concept, design, layout, and packages all on our own.

SM: Do you need to make an appointment, or do you accept walk-ins?

PG: TreePaad is open Tues-Sunday and walk-ins are always welcome. Our only exception would be if we were doing a special function, which you can always find on our website. We also love to give tours of our facility, as we are very proud of it. So if you are curious, come on in and take a peek!

SM: What are your hours of operation? Are you open all year?

PG: Our hours of operation are Tues-Thurs 10am-7pm, Fri-Sat 10am-10pm and Sunday 10am-7pm. We are open all year long. It is heated in the winter, air-conditioned in the summer, and always rain free!

SM: If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be?

Patti: Persistent.
Candy: Enterprising.

SM: What accomplishment are you most proud of?

PG: Simply being able to get a business like TreePaad started. Considering that most of the people we talked with thought it was a risky proposition, or simply that we were out of our minds, it is a great sense of accomplishment to see it doing so well.

SM: What is the most important thing that you have learned about yourselves in the process of opening your business?

PG: I think the most important thing that we have realized is that we need each other. We work well together, and complement each other nicely. We also learned that friends and family are amazing things to have in your life, and we couldn't have accomplished what we have without them.



We love to talk about it, and we have gone to classrooms to do business presentations. We volunteer a lot at school events, we are community and family minded, and we absolutely love what we have been given the opportunity to do.