

WORK & WEALTH

how i did it

CAKES THAT COMFORT

AMY HILLIARD
FOUNDER: THE COMFORTCAKE COMPANY

Amy Hilliard's favorite dessert has always been pound cake. Whenever she'd bake them for dinner parties or her children's bake sales, she'd draw raves—and suggestions that she sell them. After serving as senior vice-president of marketing for Soft Sheen Products—and before that as a marketing exec at Pillsbury, Gillette and Burrell Communications Group—the savvy Howard University graduate and Harvard M.B.A. ventured out on her own. Today the Detroit native owns Chicago-based The ComfortCake Company, LLC, makers of “pound cake so good it feels like a hug.” ComfortCakes are in nearly one hundred Cub Foods and Jewel stores throughout the Midwest. With a small staff and two bakeries that bake cakes in volume, The ComfortCake Company is a success no matter how you slice it.

COOKING UP A PLAN: “At a Christmas party someone tasted one of my liqueur-infused cakes and said, ‘Wow, this is a comfortable cake.’ I checked the name ComfortCake on the Internet and it was available. So I filed for a trademark and domain name (comfortcake.com) and put my dream into action. After consulting with my family, I sold my home with one goal in mind: to become the premium producer of pound cakes.”

NO CAKEWALK: “It was difficult to find a bakery that could fill large orders and bake our cakes from scratch. Through networking we landed a meeting with United Airlines that led us to our current baker, whom we've used for two years.”

LET THEM EAT CAKE: “Two days after we met with United, the airline ordered 500,000 slices to be served on its Hawaii flights. Then came our biggest client, the Chicago public-school system, which so far has served students more than 1 million slices. In addition, ComfortCakes have been featured on the Home Shopping Network and are also available at amazon.com in the Gourmet Food section. Our single-size Baby Bundts are sold in 7-Eleven stores nationwide.”

WORKING WITH FAITH: “Starting a business is tough. You must be committed to making it happen and above all, you must have faith. That means: F: Focus on the goal. A: Assume success. I: Combine instinct, intellect and integrity. T: Trust that it's not an overnight process. And H: Lead with your heart.”—SHERRI A. MCGEE ▶



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