

The Challenges of Being a Lingerie Retailer

Contributed by Toni Livesey
Friday, 18 August 2006

There are very few of us women who don't like sexy lingerie and so you would think that lingerie retailers would find it easy to make sales and do business. However selling lingerie can have its challenges as the mother and daughter team behind AboutCurves.com have found out.

This August, AboutCurves.com celebrates its fifth anniversary with an expanded product line. What began as a small company has become a well-known retailer in the plus size community. Over the past five years, the company's revenue has grown exponentially and over 2000 women across the globe have worn About Curves' plus size lingerie.

In a time during which many web startups failed, About Curves reflects on the decisions that have made them a success. These factors include demanding high quality lingerie styles, using exclusively plus size models, and top-notch customer satisfaction that includes consistently working to make the website user-friendly.

The owners of About Curves separate themselves from other retailers by working closely with manufacturers to make lingerie that is tailored to plus size women. According to partner KC Culver, the company initially had a difficult time finding styles that they liked. "The few manufacturers who were providing plus sizes just used more fabric to create the same styles they offered in regular sizes. They didn't think about how that style would look on a curvy woman."

As a result, owners met with manufacturers to create styles that flatter the above-average figure. This includes providing more coverage of tummy and hips, providing underwire for added support, and using lightweight fabrics that don't cling to the body.

Partner Robin Culver credits much of the website's success to their decision to show lingerie only on plus-size models. When the company started, many competitors used manufacturer's photos of skinny models to sell plus size lingerie. To set themselves apart, About Curves held their own photo shoots from day one to capture their items on real plus size women.

Robin reflects on their photo shoots: "We've always used our friends, neighbors, and colleagues instead of professional models. We want our customers to be able to see themselves in the items we're selling. At our first photo shoot, the models were all so nervous, we had to rearrange the order of the garments being photographed, from the most concealing to the most revealing."

Customer satisfaction is the number one concern of both owners, which undoubtedly ensures their success. "My favorite part of this job," says Robin, "is the appreciation we get from our customers. Just this week, we got an e-mail that said, 'Thank you for making me feel like a girl wearing lingerie, instead of a fat girl wearing lingerie.' When we hear from our customers, all of our work is worth it."

In honor of their fifth anniversary, AboutCurves.com has expanded their product line to include accessories, including feather boas and fans, satin marabou slippers, and body products including oils, lotions, and bubble bath. In addition, About Curves is offering shoppers large bonuses through their loyalty program, to show appreciation for the customers who have made the business a success.

About The Company:

About Curves was started in 2001 by a mother-daughter team who were frustrated by the lack of options available to women who do not fit the "model mold." Their mission is to provide women with the ability to feel sexy and to encourage women of all shapes and sizes to celebrate their curves.

Every product offered by About Curves is personally approved by a team of discriminating shoppers, and then modeled by plus size women in About Curves' very own photo shoots.

The owners pride themselves on their insistence that women should not be made to squeeze their bodies into outfits that are uncomfortable, disrespectful, or poorly made.

The webstore now offers over 300 different products. The line includes traditional lingerie, including babydolls, bustiers,

gowns, chemises, camisole sets, and teddys, as well as specializing in robe sets and bridal lingerie. The new expanded line also includes costumes, body products, feather products, and shoes.