

SHAWNA PAGE: BUSINESS COMES NATURALLY

June 8, 2009



By Miranda Voth

Shawna Page has been a believer in organics and natural supplements for over 20 years. She buys milk in glass bottles, eats organic food, and uses natural beauty products, right down to her deodorant.

"I was into organics before it was fashionable ... I was taking vitamins when people thought people who took vitamins wore Birkenstocks and were into [going] naked," says Shawna, founder and CEO of **femMED**, a line of all-natural supplements that treat women's most common health concerns.

When it comes to feeding her kids, Shawna's rule is that if they can't pronounce the ingredients, they can't eat it. "I've done the test. I've taken them grocery shopping with me and I say, 'okay you want that, you read me what's on the ingredient list.' And they can't. I can't even pronounce it."

Shawna is a wife, mother of three, and worked in the investment banking industry for 20 years prior to founding femMED. When I meet her, the petite, fit brunette is looking chic in her black leather jacket and Prada shades – a far cry from nudity and Birkenstocks.

When Shawna turned 40, she began experiencing harsher PMS symptoms, erratic cycles, and because she isn't fond of dairy, was constantly worrying about osteoporosis. She found she was taking more and more vitamins to alleviate her concerns.

Before April, 2008, the natural products in Canadian drugstores that treated feminine health issues specifically "were one-offs," says Shawna. "There wasn't a complete line dedicated to the needs of women." Sure, it was possible to put together a regimen, but even with her bachelors degree in science, Shawna felt slightly lost.

She took this oversight personally. Shawna is the eldest of 14 granddaughters, has three sisters, and her son was the first boy born into the family in 46 years. She decided to fill the void herself by creating femMED.

Shawna assembled a team of doctors, naturopaths, herbalists, pharmacists, and formulators to develop the first five formulas. They picked common female issues like PMS and menopausal symptoms, bone and breast health, and weight management, and created formulas that include all necessary ingredients to treat each issue. "We're not about single ingredients because to figure out what to take requires a lot of thought and a lot of education," says Shawna. "It's the idea that a woman who is having trouble sleeping can walk into a drug store to find a product called 'sleep.'"

In November, 2007, Shawna and her partners pitched their idea to Shoppers Drug Mart.

Shawna was used to her former profession, where she created the presentations but never gave them. "On the day of the pitch, I was so nervous I could barely breathe," she says. But the Shoppers Drug Mart category buyer was a woman in her mid-40s. She recognized the need and offered femMED an exclusive contract. After celebratory high-fives in the parking lot, Shawna and her partners went straight home to start planning for their new role as experts in natural women's supplements.

Next, they pitched their idea to investors to help fund the launch, including the actual

manufacturing of the products and an advertising awareness campaign. "With that passion for the concept we were able to raise the funding inside of a week or two. It was that fast," says Shawna.

By April, 2008, the first five formulas were available at Shoppers Drug Mart. Over the first year, femMED launched eight more formulas. At the end of femMED's exclusivity deal with Shoppers, they successfully pitched to Walmart, Zellers, Metro chains, The Katz Group (Rexall and Pharmaplus), and several independents in Canada. In April 2009, femMED made its debut at Duane Reade stores in New York.

Even as her business expands, Shawna is still the front woman of femMED. She answers all customer email inquiries about the products personally (it helps that she takes six out of the 13 products).

"All I had was an idea and the passion to drive that idea forward, [plus] an unbelievable fan club of supporters cheering me on," says Shawna. "I've really had a huge belief in this from years back. And so when we went to create this line, it had me at the heart of it, literally."

Miranda Voth is also making an effort to live more naturally. Find out how by visiting her ['It's Not Easy Being Green'](#) blog feature.

For a video interview of Shawna Page, [click here](#). Also be sure to check out Shawna as the Women's Post *Woman of the Week*.

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