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## How I Became an Entrepreneur - Step Two

Waheeda Harris 

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 As a fledgling running her own business, Shawna Page realized that she had a major gap in her knowledge.

Everything she had learned in her career over 20 years was valuable experience but her laundry list of new to her was endless: planning, warehousing, fulfillment, packaging, and regulatory – all of these were essential to the success of femMED.



"I had a very steep learning curve," said Page.

Learning how to get her product on the shelf was trial by fire, learning how to pitch the product, hiring a broker, getting meetings with the right people, creating a website, completing formulations with scientists, hiring a research firm – for Page it never seemed to stop.

Would all this learning be too much or worth the effort for her own business? One of her big hurdles was learning about Health Canada regulations and processes that needed to be met for her company. Page's litmus test was making herself the consumer – creating something she would want to buy. Keeping this in mind, kept Page engaged in each step of the development of femMED's supplements, despite her learning curve.

In April 2008, femMED was launched at Shopper's Drug Mart across Canada, but that was only the beginning. Page focused on creating brand awareness, since she knew her product was unique in the marketplace. Advertising, website, social media, women's health symposiums – all of these were targets to spread the word on femMED.

But, all these efforts drained the company bank accounts, and Page knew she not only had to keep it up to boost sales, but also needed to work ahead in the development of new formulations. According to [recent surveys](#), more than half of new businesses will fail within five years.

In 2009, femMED expanded its shelf presence to other retailers, including Rexall, Wal-Mart, Zellers, Metro and health retailers. These customers were gold to the company. "Our expansion into these retailers was a big pat on the back for my company," explained Page, "They showed their faith in what we had created."

femMED was standing tall in the marketplace despite competition. Page had expanded the retail presence by 100 per cent and the company now offered 13 different supplements for women's health, all done with a staff of less than five people. Sales were strong and the company was ready to move into the next phase.

Page learned that being labeled Canadian was an advantage in the international market because of the strict regulations, but that is also made it tough for small businesses in Canada. "I had to keep following my gut, since I knew it wasn't going to get easier."

Part three – see how Page & femMED survived the recession effects in 2010, and the company's current status and what's going to come for 2012.