



UNLEASHING  
THE ENTREPRENEUR  
INSIDE YOU



**2.0 minutes with...**

**Laura Slama | Owner and chief granola girl  
Laura's Gourmet LLC**

*Laura's Gourmet LLC, based in Tempe, bakes and distributes Laura's Gourmet Granola.*

**What is one of your business goals for 2010?** 2010 is the "year of the oat." We plan to increase distribution to include the East Coast, and nearly double last year's sales of 12,500 pounds.

**How have you changed your business strategy to reflect current economic conditions?** My strategy already lends itself to the current economy: building mutually beneficial relationships locally, never compromising quality and keeping communication open with customers. I also have become more active in social media.

**Do you have an exit strategy or a succession plan for when you retire?** The only exit strategy is when Quaker, Kashi or some other large brand comes calling and wants to purchase Laura's Gourmet. Maybe I'll consider it.

**What do you know now that you wish you had known when you started your business?**  
Sleep is a luxury.

**How do you market?** I use a variety of platforms including social media, public relations and distribution representatives. I'm constantly networking and building relationships. Word of mouth has played a significant role. But the best marketing tool is to be a shameless self-promoter. I don't go anywhere without samples.

**What mistake have you learned from?** Never ask a consumer to taste your product at a demonstration. People will try something if they want to.

**What's the best piece of business advice you ever received?** My best friend innocently suggested one day: "You know, you should really try selling this."

**What resources did you use to help develop your business and marketing plans?** Greater Phoenix Score, branding guru Gary Richards and Public Relations Wired PR.

**How do you use technology to promote your business?** I'm very active on Facebook. It has enabled me to communicate directly with granola fans, get feedback and even fill orders. I also use Twitter and have some videos in the works for YouTube. I am in the process of launching laurasgourmet.com, a website that serves as a virtual store and a hub for announcements, recipes and information.

**What is a significant goal you achieved in the past 12 months?** Laura's Gourmet shipped more than 6 tons in fiscal 2009, and in the first quarter of 2010 surpassed all expectations by shipping more than 2 tons.

**What is the biggest challenge you've overcome in growing your business?** Being afraid of my own success.

**What advice do you have for entrepreneurs just starting out?** If you have a passion, idea or dream, believe in it wholeheartedly and go get it. Stay motivated, reminding yourself that no one is going to do it for you. And always listen to your gut.