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## Your Start-Up Life: Tory Burch on Making Fashion Her Business

Thursdays at the Huffington Post, Rana Florida, CEO of [The Creative Class Group](#), shares her conversations with successful entrepreneurs and thought leaders about how they manage their businesses, their relationships, their careers, and more. She also answers readers' questions about how they can optimize their lives. Send your questions about work, life, or relationships to [rana@creativeclass.com](mailto:rana@creativeclass.com)

When a stalled economy and a shrinking job market open the door for innovation and entrepreneurship, a good idea can catch on very quickly. The creative innovators who launch these new enterprises can find sudden success and rapid growth a great challenge to manage. I asked the popular fashion designer, [Tory Burch](#), about how she sustains her core mission and product quality as her business quickly expands around the world.

When she launched her line of clothing and accessories out of her New York City apartment eight years ago, her label was an instant success. She was endorsed by [Oprah Winfrey](#) and has won several fashion awards for her designs. Tory Burch products are now sold through hundreds of upscale department and specialty stores, as well as three dozen dedicated boutiques in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.



[Tory Burch](#) in London

*Q. How do you manage quality and pay attention to detail and make big picture strategy decisions both at the same time?*

I would never be able to do what I do without having an exceptional team. I hire people that I believe in and empower them to make decisions without micromanaging.

*Q. How important is the team you pick to support your business? What traits do you look for in hiring?*

It's truly all about our team. I look for passion, creative thinking and a strong work ethic.

*Q. How do you keep your team motivated? What inspires you and keeps you motivated?*

It's inspiring for my team and I to build our business together. Our company is constantly evolving, so we are always pushing each other to come up with ideas, try new things and explore different opportunities.

*Q. How do you balance expansion while not diluting or compromising the brand?*

Our growth and global expansion have been really exciting, but we are careful and always think about how our decisions affect the long-term.

*Q. How do you expand stores into new markets? Do you select locations based on gut and intuition or do you delve into consumer research?*

A little bit of both. We do a great deal of research before we launch into a new country or product category, but a part of it is instinctual.

*Q. How important is timing the market for a new idea or trend?*

Timing is key; however it's not an exact science. We always try to be strategic, but we want to take risks as well.

*Q. Most people are either left-brained or right-brained (logical or creative) but you seem to be both. Do you view yourself first as a creative fashion designer or savvy businesswoman?*

One of the most interesting and challenging parts of my job is being equally creative and business-minded in every aspect of our company. I've never been to design or business school, but in some ways that has helped me because I didn't think about impossibility. I've learned on the job and trusted my instincts.

*Q. How do you juggle and balance priorities and constituents, from consumers to media to suppliers and distributors?*

We choose all of our partners carefully and make each of them a priority, as every aspect of our business is connected. We look for people who share our vision for the long-term.

*Q. What lessons do you take from failure?*

Failure is a part of growing, so it's important to not be afraid of it. Turn it into a positive and learn from it.

*Q. You paint a perfect picture; how do you balance your business, philanthropic work and family/social life?*

That's a big compliment, but I'm far from perfect. Finding balance is my greatest challenge every day, but no matter what my family comes first.

The [successful entrepreneur](#) engages in a delicate balancing act. She must recognize the need for savvy and careful business management, while at the same time keeping alive the risk-taking creativity that launched the enterprise in the first place. Burch understood that to keep her red-hot business from burning out too fast, she had to surround herself with talent, not only on the creative side, but on the business side as well.

Most importantly, those people need to function in an environment of trust, in which trial-and-error is encouraged, and in which new ideas can flourish. As a new business matures, the entrepreneur's job, like any chief executive, is to keep the growing staff focused on the original product vision, but also to know when to let go, and let the team work its magic.

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