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MBA INSIDER: A DAY IN THE LIFE June 19, 2007, 9:48PM EST

A Post-MBA Recipe for Success

A Florida International graduate follows her heart and starts her own cupcake business. It's a labor of love

by [Misha Kuryla Gomez](#)

After I received my MBA from [Florida International University](#), I got a job in sales at UPS ([UPS](#)) and soon gave birth to my daughter. At that point, I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom, but my husband insisted that I find a job. I'd always wanted to start a business, so I decided to bake some cupcakes and take them to every person I know and some charity events.

I even took them to strangers and finally landed my first wholesale account. Little by little, after a lot of free samples, I started getting calls for more orders. And through the amazing word of mouth of happy cupcake eaters, I was able to grow to where I am now (and stop working from home). Currently, I sell to nine restaurants, bakeries, and cafés, and am working on a partnership to open a cupcake/cookie store.

My job responsibilities are everything from A to Z. Thanks to my MBA, I know how to do every aspect of my business. Unfortunately, there is not enough time in the day to get it all done. So I try to do banking, billing, supply orders, accounting, employee counseling, and just about everything else once a week at some point.

Here's a typical day in my life:

6:00 a.m.—I leave my house at 5:50 a.m., and the warehouse is 10 minutes away so I get there really quick. First thing I do is turn on the ovens—one of the ovens takes an hour and a half to heat up because it's the huge commercial kind. Then I sit down and write up the numbers of how many cupcakes and actual cakes we're doing that day. I prepare any late-evening orders and put them in the oven. Then I check my e-mail. Since my business has grown and I can't be there all the time, I have two girls to help with the baking—soon I plan to make more hires.

8:00 a.m.—My two helpers arrive. When I began my business, I was by myself using my home oven and trying to work during the hours that my infant daughter (at the time she was five months old) was sleeping. Now, I just hand them the numbers and they get to work.

9:00 a.m.—I organize the orders for the various restaurants, bakeries, and cafés, and by that time the delivery person comes to do the pickup. He's on his way out within a few minutes.

10:00 a.m.—I head out to Costco ([COST](#)), where I still go to buy all of my supplies, and then I bring them back to the warehouse. Since I used to work out of the house, I still haven't arranged for them to be delivered.

1:00 p.m.—I eat a salad that I brought from home—for now, I'm on the South Beach Diet. When I'm off the diet, I'll return to eating whatever I can find and consume on the go. Once in a while, I try to get a chance to sneak in a cup of coffee

with a friend, or get a pedicure once a month, but time is getting tighter.

2:00 p.m.—I had a bunch of cakes to do that the girls aren't trained how to do yet. One of them is our Chocolate Tuxedo Cake. It's got whipped cream all around it with chocolate sauce on top—just thinking about it makes me hungry. Whenever I can, if I have extra time, I try to do new recipes, so I can keep offering new stuff.

3:30 p.m.—We finish baking, frosting, and cleaning up. Once I'm alone, I take a look at my e-mails again, file my invoices, and prepare batter for the next day.

4:00 p.m.—About three people come in to buy cupcakes. Since we officially announced our opening, I started getting all of these people coming in randomly like it's a shop instead of a warehouse. Throughout the entire day, I sell about \$70 worth of cupcakes just to people who walk in. But within two or three months, we're planning to put a kiosk in Dadeland Mall (one of the biggest malls in Miami). It will have our new, really cute logo on it. We've also been talking to someone about partnering up for a café in South Beach.

5:30 p.m.—When I get home, the first thing I do is give my daughter a huge hug—she's the reason I do what I do. I never thought it would be as good as it is. I love being my own boss and never really enjoyed having someone else tell me how to work.

Years ago, after I received my undergraduate degree at University of Pennsylvania, I spent two years living in Italy. There I did everything you could imagine—interned at a perfume company, worked at a hotel, worked as a tour guide, and even babysat. But I also always baked the desserts for all the parties—I realized I totally liked baking (but hated cooking). To be honest, I just had a great cupcake recipe—actually, vanilla, which has white chocolate morsels in it, is our best seller. I thought the chocolate would always be the most popular, but it comes after the vanilla.

Right now, a good part of my day revolves around pickups at the warehouse from retail customers, picking up my daughter from school (she is 2 now), and taking orders. Since we transferred to the warehouse, things have moved quickly, so I'm constantly meeting with caterers, suppliers, and marketers. I find that less time is spent in the kitchen and more taking orders and planning for future endeavors.

I don't use much of what I learned from B-school for the job. Instead, I've had experiences and met people who taught me about life and what it takes to be successful. During my MBA, I would have loved to do an internship with a startup business, and perhaps had classes that involved real-world training and scenarios of the day-to-day life of running your own business.

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