

Biological clock, business plans a confusing mix

I was at a store this week and they had the best baby shoes. They were more like slippers, with monkey faces on them. It was tempting, but I did not buy them.

Yes, the biological clock is ticking, and not just for me. My husband-to-be has become that guy who looks at kids in the supermarket, and I constantly have to tell him that he is freaking out the mother. His answer is usually, "But he/she is so cute."

So OK, we are already nesting, and with our wedding less than five months away, starting a family isn't far behind. But where does that leave my business?

I actually had a reality check this week. It came early one morning while I was up preparing to go to my job in Toronto. There was a news program on the television about women entrepre-

neurs, specifically women entrepreneurs with children. That's when I learned that in addition to the challenges of being a new mom, I wouldn't be able to depend on any maternity benefits.



SANDRA DIMITRAKOPOULOS WORKING FOR YOURSELF

While I had always known that starting my own business would mean giving up many of the benefits available to employees of major corporations, I just assumed the government helped out when it came to having babies. Instead, I may have to choose between giving up the business, or fighting even harder to keep it.

One way to deal with this problem is to make sure there is a good support network in place, says Heana Rontea, a small business owner who helps train women who want to start their own businesses.

"Make sure that your family understands your needs and is able to help out," she says, whether that means getting them to babysit, or getting your husband to make dinner.

"It's tough to grow the business, and

it will be tough to do the baby thing at the same time."

Rontea, who is also the owner of Mind Ignition, a small business that helps entrepreneurs market themselves, says that if you have the extra money, it is also a good idea to pay someone to do things that you don't have time for; such as cleaning and bookkeeping.

"Get someone to do those things that are difficult or time consuming, or are not bringing you money."

In her experience, Rontea says one of the biggest mistakes women make is not taking care of themselves. That means eating right, getting enough sleep and exercising.

"It's very important that you keep that balance in your mind and realize that something is going to give, and it shouldn't be you," she says.

"Maybe the house isn't going to be as spotless as you'd like it, and maybe you're not going to be making the gourmet meals that you used to, but just have your priorities and be very organized."

In the middle of our conversation, I discussed my own personal concerns with her, and she asked me: "Can you wait until the baby is a bit older, or wait to have a family?"

These are questions I have been asking myself for months now, and the answer is no, I can't. And I don't think I should have to choose.

So if anyone in my wonderful family is reading this, I hope you are ready to babysit.

• Sandra Dimitrakopoulos of Waterloo can be reached at sdimitra@yahoo.com.