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WHERE WOMEN **CREATE** BUSINESS

A PASSION FOR SUCCESS



CAROLINE
DeCESARE OF
DESIGN LAB
ON BUILDING A
BRICK & MORTAR
RETAIL BUSINESS

AMY BUTLER'S
TIPS ON HOW TO WORK
WITH YOUR HUSBAND

ON THE FARM WITH
**THE LADIES OF
LAVENDER HILL**

ANNA GRIFFIN
TALKS PRODUCT DESIGN

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ON THE COVER

Caroline DeCesare, owner of the retail business Design Lab, is featured on this issue's cover.



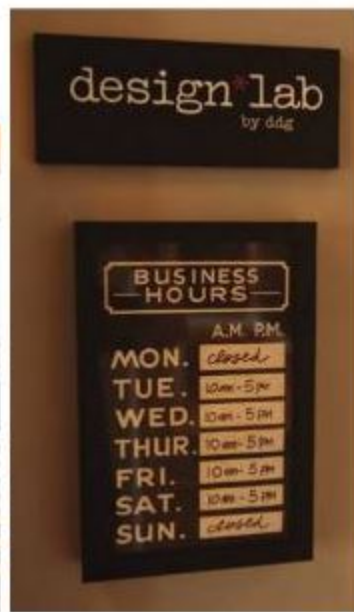
CAROLINE TYLER DeCESARE

What do you do when you are a sought-after interior designer with a thriving firm who also happens to be expecting her third child? Open a retail store, of course! Caroline Tyler DeCesare is known, not only for her luxurious interior design, but also for being a woman who likes a big project and likes to get it done in record time. So, when a retail space became available in the building where her design firm (DeCesare Design Group, Inc.) was located, the wheels in her brain turned to thoughts of adding a retail component to her business mix. The store space fell vacant in March of 2012, and by May 10 Design Lab was open for business. In just 60 days, Design Lab went from a gleam in Caroline's eye to a retail reality.



Before one product was ordered for Design Lab, I invested time in deciding what the store would and wouldn't be. The branding was essential to communicate the message behind the store's tagline: "Because Life is An Experiment." I had a Table of Design Elements designed to illustrate the various areas of interior design and hung it in front of a wall of vintage test tubes and lab equipment. I also decided that employees would dress in all black with red shoes and a cute lab coat over the top.

The concept for Design Lab was a laboratory for experimenting with visual inspiration for the home; a place that would encourage customers to venture out and try new ideas in their own spaces. The store allows customers to get a little piece of what we do for our design clients, without having the million-dollar budgets. People tend to think that there is some secret to interior design and unless you are a designer, you can't come up with great ideas for your home. What they don't realize is that it all comes down to experimentation — trying out different ideas to see what works best for you in your home.



BUSINESS TIP

Plan as much as you can, but at some point you just have to make the leap. It's only in the doing of things that you really figure out what works and what doesn't. So, if you've been hatching a plan for years and putting it off, what are you waiting for? Do it!





The areas of the store were designed with this experimentation in mind. Customers can freshen up their furniture with brand new throw pillows from the Pillow Wall or add a touch of industrial-strength cool to their home by installing a giant letter from the Alphabet Wall. I also have just the teeniest obsession with stationery and office supplies, so there is a finely honed collection of cool cards, interesting notebooks, and irreverent sticky notes to choose from. Customers can purchase my favorite pens that I use to redline house plans or the notebooks I use to sketch ideas for room designs.

Stylish entertaining is another part of the experimental mix at Design Lab, so I have enlisted the help of my team at DeCesare Design Group by assigning each employee a seasonal display during the year that is all their own. That designer comes up with the concept and execution of the display for the store. This has resulted in fascinating travel displays with vintage globes and paper airplanes, as well as back-to-school concepts that included a gigantic pencil suspended from the ceiling.



To further showcase the talents of my design team, I have also devoted an area of the store to design teams picks where we feature their favorite items. Each designer weighs in on his or her favorite products, which are displayed on an industrial shelving unit and labeled with chalk on mini, metal chalkboard signs. These items are often the first to sell out.

The retail space is small, just 1,100 square feet, so Design Lab wasn't ever going to be a furniture store. I wanted the space itself to be inspiring, so we created a huge inspiration board to get customers thinking, to encourage them to not be afraid to experiment with the design in their homes, and to see it as an evolving concept that changes with the seasons and phases of their lives.

And speaking of phases of life, just two and a half months after Design Lab opened, my first daughter, Kate, was born. Born seven weeks early, baby Kate carries on our family tradition of women in a hurry to get things done.

Where Women Create BUSINESS would like to thank Caroline DeCesore for her involvement in our Winter Issue. To learn more, visit designlabddg.com and DesignLabByDdg on Facebook.

