

Entrepreneur of the Year 2011: Mary Relotto

ANNOUNCEMENTS — BY MELANIE MCINTYRE ON DECEMBER 29, 2011 AT 8:00 AM

The votes have been counted and it's official: Mary Relotto is The Metropreneur's 2011 "Entrepreneur of the Year."

Relotto is the founder of Dames Bond, which has been connecting women in business to consumers and resources since 2006. The Steubenville native says she is "honored, humbled and encouraged" by the "Entrepreneur of the Year" designation.

"When others have faith in you, it encourages you to be your best and to never give up," she adds. "Thanks to Metropreneur's readers for your continued support! It's a wonderful feeling to know others have your back."

Relotto is no stranger to accolades. In 2010, *Forbes Woman* named Dames Bond one of the "Ten Best Career Sites for Women." Relotto isn't resting on her laurels, though.

Dames Bond's success in Central Ohio led Relotto to establish a chapter in Northwest Ohio in June. A chapter in Nashville will launch next month and DamesBondNationwide.com, which will serve as an online business directory, is scheduled to go live Jan. 1.



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Before solely dedicating herself to helping women succeed, Relotto worked in the nonprofit sector. For about 22 years, she performed a variety of duties, from managing capital campaigns and donor stewardship to writing newsletters and developing marketing materials.

She started Dames Bond while working a full-time job and finally left to focus on her passion April 1.

"The best business advice I've gotten is to have a business plan," she says. "I always thought they were just for funding purposes, but, in reality, it helps keep me focused, on target and motivated to achieve my goals."

Her advice for new business owners: patience, persistence, and partnerships are crucial.

"Success rarely comes overnight," she says. "You're destined to succeed if you have a niche, have a plan of action, you're patient with your progress, and you can establish partnerships/collaborations/alliances with other companies and organizations in which your business shares a commonality. Being persistent in all of the above activities is key."

Relotto offered the following advice to anyone looking to realize their dreams:

"If you've ever burned a bridge, consider mending it. All too often we react without thinking or knowing all of the facts. Stop, think, investigate, respond.

"Stay true to yourself and believe in your own intuitions. Ninety percent of the time you have it right. Doubting yourself will lead you to failure. When others doubt you, often times they want you to fail.

"Believe in the power of positive intention. While it may sound new age, I believe whole-heartedly that reminding yourself that you have a good thing going will keep you energized, focused, and help you eliminate the negative."

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