

OFFICE ROMANCES
THEY'RE A TEAM, AT WORK OR AT HOME

Judie Berry-Nix and Rob Nix
Simply Thank You!

When Judie Berry decided to open a business, she turned to her friend and former colleague, Rob Nix, for advice. She had the vision for an upscale custom gift basket company, but she needed a more analytical mind to work out the business model and finances.

"I did it as a favor, like you'd do someone's taxes," Rob says. With the two of them working together, Simply Thank You! opened for business 12 years ago. Eight years ago, Judie and Rob were married and now have two beautiful and active girls; Tayla and Hayden.

"We balance each other out," Judie says. "He's analytical, I'm creative. Besides being a good husband, he's smart as a whip. And the best part is that I know we have the same goals."

Those goals include learning to customize each gift basket so that it represents each client's personality and preferences. Simply Thank You! is not a retail store, and gift baskets are available only after a scheduled appointment at the showroom or by placing an online order. The personal attention allows Judie and Rob to learn about each client's needs and tastes.



"We're selling a service, not just a product," Rob says. "We do not mass produce our baskets," Judie adds.

For example, Simply Thank You! offers a "Home Sweet Home" basket that is popular within the real estate industry, and a North Carolina-theme basket that appeals to a variety of businesses across the state. Each basket is custom made, and a company can add something such as a mug with its company logo, pens or notepads. Judie customizes even the ribbon to match a company's colors or theme.

Judie has always enjoyed making gifts for other people, and when she opened Simply Thank You! she was able to turn a hobby into a job. "We realized the need for this type of service," she says.

"I enjoy that she enjoys what she's doing," Rob says. "It allows for her to look forward to going to work."

The most difficult aspect of owning her own company for Judie, however, is learning when to quit. "I would work 24 hours a day," Judie says. "I need to know when it's time to turn off the business."

Her husband agrees. Rob appreciates his wife's outgoing personality and ability to connect with customers on an individual level, but when she can't sleep because she is brainstorming a basket idea or theme for someone, he knows he needs to step in. "Sometimes I have to reel her back in," he says. "It's a job, but it's not a 24-hour job."

But the best part about owning their business is the flexibility. "Trying to marry home life with business life is easier," Rob explains. Judie and Rob and their two daughters spend a lot of time in the design studio, which Rob believes builds family unity. "We can enjoy each other's company, but we're being productive as well."

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