

BEST PRACTICES: Z-Coil footwear

She hears 'ugly' every day but that's the challenge

You might say it helps to be in pain to have the courage to fight the fashion trends of shoes that kill your feet.

"I hear ugly every day but once (customers) try them on people have immediate relief. I hear about and see miracles daily," says Mary Ageton, owner of two Z-Coil Pain Relief Footwear stores in Tucson.

I wouldn't call the shoes ugly but they are different. They sport a conical shaped coil under the heel.

"The coil reduces stress on the foot 50 percent," said Ageton. "We have customers from age 12 to the 90s. Nurses and clinical people, anybody who works on their feet long hours, tries our product and finds instant relief. We have hundreds of testimonials from satisfied customers."

Ageton is a registered nurse who was attracted to the business when she bought a pair. She bought the shoes for the usual reason — as a nurse, her feet hurt. She saw them on a friend and tried them. After wearing the shoes a short time, she said, "We really need a store here in town."

Very soon, she took the training in Albuquerque, where the owner, a marathon runner in his late 70s, founded the business in 1995 after suffering his own foot and back problems. Al Gallegos developed his Z-Coil shoes and shortly after opening his business his wife died of cancer, leaving him to build the business and raise their eight children.

The company now has about 20 different styles and the business has grown steadily since 1995.

Ageton faced a steep learning curve, moving from nursing to business, thinking initially the business would fly on its own.

She soon mastered marketing and



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herself to realize her well-trained employees will never do it exactly as she would do it.


"I've learned that's OK," she said.

That best practice is one that if not conquered can cause entrepreneurial businesses to fail or at least be unable to grow.

Another best practice is the focus on educating and listening to the customer.

"I pay salary rather than commission base because I think commission distracts from focusing on the customer," said Ageton. "I genuinely like people and I want to educate them. I'm happy to give them a lot of education so they can consider their options, whether that means going to see a podiatrist, trying my product or another product.

"Finding good resources was challenging at first. I now have people I trust to help in my business and feel that everything is in order," said Ageton. "I find it more rewarding than nursing because I can help people right away and I am still able to make a difference in people's life."

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business and the business has grown steadily each year.

Managing two stores has presented a challenge. She hired good people and did some personal growth

Biz Facts

Z-Coil Pain Relief Footwear

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