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Neighbor

Lynn Leventhal
Computer Consultant, Chappaqua

By Martin Wilbur

Lynn Leventhal never set out to be a computer consultant. But about 10 years ago, she began doing a favor for parents she knew in her neighborhood who were sending their children off to summer camp and wanted them to have mailing labels so they would write letters during their time away.

"I would go to somebody's home and set up their computer database then merge in all the names and addresses of friends and relatives. After I did this a few times, someone said to me 'You should do this as a business,'" Leventhal recalled.

She took the unsolicited advice and hasn't looked back. For the past decade Leventhal has owned The Computer Icon, a business she operates out of an office in her Chappaqua home. Of course, since then she's branched way beyond mailing labels. Today, roughly half of the customers retained by Leventhal, a self-taught techie, is for computer troubleshooting, many of them older clients who don't have the patience or the know-how to deal with the myriad of problems that can crop up with a computer.

The other half of her business makes good use of her more than 25 years of marketing and branding experience. Leventhal designs Web sites and logos for individuals and small businesses.

So how did Leventhal, 50, who graduated from Ithaca College in 1981 with a degree in marketing and psychology, transform herself into a computer-savvy business-

woman?

"I never took courses but I am an extraordinarily patient person, so I think that's really what helped me learn," said Leventhal. "I'll read a book or do what I need to do to find out how to solve the problem."

The patience has certainly paid off. As her own boss and being able to charge what she describes as more reasonable rates, Leventhal said she has been able to take the time walking people through the steps they need to learn to become computer literate. If that means spending a couple extra of hours at no charge or a reduced rate, so be it. As a result, she's been able to grow her business almost exclusively through word of mouth.

"I really got started by helping people with whatever their needs were," explained Leventhal, whose interest in religions led her to become a Reiki master, a technique for stress reduction. "I wanted to help them put balance in their lives. In the beginning I worked with many older people who didn't feel comfortable using the computer, and over the years I have taught myself everything there is to know about computers."

While she may not have been able to predict the type of business she has invested the last 10 years in, it's no surprise that Leventhal has made it successful. A self-described go-getter, she grew up in Long Island and went to college thinking she would pursue a career as a psychologist. But at the time another four years of school was unappealing, as she wanted to get out



into the world and start working.

So Leventhal switched her focus to marketing, since she liked the creativity involved. While still in college, she won one of two full-time internships to a major Manhattan marketing firm, then after school followed that up with her first paying job, an assistant media planner for the grand salary of \$9,500.

Since then virtually all of her jobs—and there have been many—were marketing related. Leventhal said she was able to find and sometimes create many of her own jobs, moving on quickly every couple of years to newer and more exciting opportunities.

While she was home with her children, Leventhal was a freelance marketing manager for Landor Associates, a global branding and identity firm in New York City. She even started a previous business at one point helping college students find jobs.

But it is her work since launching The Computer Icon in 2000 that has been the most rewarding for Leventhal. She has helped a wide range of clients by finding out what they want to accomplish with a

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Web site or new logo, and tailoring it to fit the image they want to project. Leventhal's done work for a Manhattan lawyer and head hunter, Steve McNamara at Westchester Athletic Conditioning, and the Ocean State Animal Coalition, a Rhode Island spay and neutering clinic.

During the past year, Leventhal said her business has really taken off since she's now an empty-nester with both of her children in college. She and her husband David, an electronics industry manufacturing rep, have two children, a 19-year-old son Michael and a 22-year-old daughter, Alison.

"I've been doing it for 10 years. I've got a great client base, which is so exciting to me because I love it," she said. "I am a computer enthusiast *and* a people person. My previous creativity was evident in problem solving with the computer. When I started doing Web sites and graphic design, I was thrilled that I was now able to truly express my creativity graphically. Now I'm doing logos, postcards, business cards and Web sites for individuals and small businesses. I love developing Web sites."

To find out more about The Computer Icon, visit www.thecomputericon.com or contact Lynn Leventhal at 914-260-4280 or at lynnleventhal@aol.com.



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