

## **Interview with Accidental Pren-her Mary Kay Russell**

S: Hi! My name is Susan Reid. I'm your host, and today we're talking with Mary Kay Russell. Mary Kay is the president of Kubit2me Incorporated and is the creator of the marvelous Kubit2me, award-winning ultimate toss-it-to-me game. Now the cool thing about this is that in 2008 Kubit2me Lil' Scholars Edition earned a prestigious award. It earned the Creative Child of the Year Award in the Preschool Educational Games category. Quite an honor for Mary Kay and her game. In today's podcast, we are going to find out what the inspiration was behind this unique product, and what makes Kubit2me so incredibly popular and successful. And finally, how valuable research is before launching any products. Mary Kay, welcome to the show!

MKR: Thank you Susan, it's a pleasure to be here.

S: It's great having you! So let's jump right in. We want to know about how you became an Accidental Pren-her, and how did you decide to create Kubit2me? Where did that inspiration come from?

MKR: Well the inspiration for Kubit2me actually was born out of a book club that I volunteer for at my son's school. I was volunteering to do an after-school book club, and we were looking for an activity that the kids could do to help them with reading comprehension. This is an after-school club and they needed to do something fun, release a little bit of pent up energy. Well, I sew different window treatments and pillows and such, so I actually made a cube-shaped pillow with pockets on all the sides. We tucked reading comprehension cards into this pillow, tossed it around, and these kids had a blast! They really came out of their shell, it was just amazing. So that was the inspiration for the game.

S: And these kids are sitting in a circle and tossing this cube back and forth?

MKR: Exactly. We had three groups of eleven kids. We had thirty-three kids sign up for this after-school club. And there were all these parent volunteers and each volunteer would take on a different group. I made three cubes, so each group had their own cube. And we would put the same conversation questions in there, and before they could toss the cube to another participant in the circle, they had to answer the question. What this did was it made them have to talk. It was it such a blast because they could not wait to get to the throwing part. But they knew before

they did that they had to talk about the book. It was a great way to get them to self-express. They had a blast doing it, so that was the inspiration!

S: I bet it was. How come a cube? I mean, why not a ball?

MKR: Well, because we needed the pockets, we had the vehicle, but we needed a place to put the questions. It made sense, a six-sided, geometric, 3-D shape, tuck on some pockets and put cards inside the pockets. That's why we did that rather than a ball.

S: That makes total sense. You know, small business owners talk about that light bulb moment, when they just knew something. I think that occurred for you?

MKR: You know, it actually occurred during this book club. What happened was that I had a parent that was helping me, actually I initially helped co-found the after-school book club idea with another friend of mine. And then we had all these other parent volunteers helping us out, one of whom worked at a nursing home. She asked me to make a cube for her, because she wanted to use it with her Alzheimer patients. They were going to put recollection therapy questions and pictures and activities inside the pockets. What was really cool as that some of these folks could play this game if they were wheelchair bound, because it is just tossing a soft cube. And they would pull a card out of the pocket and talk and reminisce. You would have a picture of Harry Truman or an old Ford, and they would pull out the card and talk about that. It was just a great therapeutic game. She's the one who actually said to me, "You need to take this to the market. There are so many applications both educational, therapeutic, and fun!" So that's what I did. I happened to have a friend in the neighborhood who was in the trade industry and I showed him the cube. He said to me, "Education is great. You need to make a game that kids are going to scream that they want to have." So that's the man down the road that was my inspiration to find out what that was.

S: Makes perfect sense to me. Tell us a little bit about your background. What prepared you to become a small business owner and create this kind of product?

MKR: You know, honestly, I have no background. I was in the telecommunications industry for fifteen years before I quit work to stay home and raise my four boys. But you know I did reach that point in my life when I was ready to go onto the next chapter. And this happened to accidentally happen, which I'm sure you can relate to!

S: Oh gosh! You know, the story for this, for everyone that is listening, is that you don't have to have some kind of amazing background to start up a business and become successful.

MKR: Absolutely. I think you speak to that in your book, too. You are going to know when it happens. Literally sometimes, it accidentally happens! That's what I love about your book, because it does talk to that. And that is exactly what happened with me.

S: And you turned your accident into a design.

MKR: Yeah.

S: I love it! Now there are three editions of the Kubit2me game. Tell us a little bit about them, and what makes them so special?

MKR: I know you mentioned that we that we won the Game of the Year award for the Lil' Scholars Kubit2me. But the first game we came out with is a game for the tween girl market. It's a Kubit2me Truth or Dare. We also had another addition that is called Kubit2me Now You're Talkin', which is for the tween/teen family. It's about self-expression. The nice part is those two games also won awards from Creative Child Magazine. They won the Preferred Game Award for 2008. So all three were award winners. The Lil' Scholars game just happened to win the Game of the Year. But what is so special about the three editions are that they help parents to connect with their children and to help kids connect with one another. In the case of the Truth or Dare game, when I mentioned to you that I had to find out what was the most needed in the market place, the tween girl market screamed to me. There is just literally nothing out there for them in the way of games. The Truth or Dare game was designed for that target market specifically as a way to get girls to connect in ways that they know how the best, and that is just chatting with one other. But the questions in the game take them to much deeper levels. And the dares are a blast! So that's a nice part of the whole line, in that they do help with the self-expression with the kids.

S: Wonderful. So I know you did a lot of research going into this. Tell us about the value of the research, and why that is so important.

MKR: I honestly think that it is the most important piece of it. Whether you are researching the product that you are going to put on the market, the way you are going to develop it, the way you are going to design it, how you are going to market it, how you are going to distribute it. You have to do

your due diligence every step of the way. And when you think that you are done researching? Research some more. I researched for two years before I even put my first dime down to spend. It was all about research. And I'm talking internet research, going to the library. I would be at toy stores, I would talk to people. Read anything you can get your hands onto about what you are about to get into. Talk to people in the industry that you want to go into. They are willing to talk to you, especially small business owners. They love hearing from people who are just starting out. Because in many cases they were there once before. It is probably the most important piece of it before you embark on something like this.

S: I agree. Often it's the piece we want to jump over.

MKR: Absolutely. And you know why? It is because it's the hardest part.

S: It is the hardest part.

MKR: It is so much easier to just be a doer, and you don't want to take the time to ask the questions and you don't want to take the time to listen. In many cases you don't know what questions to ask. That is the most intimidating thing of all. But you have got to figure out a way to push through that and like you mention in your book, and I hate to keep quoting your book here, is understanding fear and how to overcome that. It's so hugely important. You have got to figure out a way to do that.

S: If not, you will waste a lot of money.

MKR: Absolutely. And time and energy.

S: Mary Kay, what was the most difficult obstacle for you to overcome?

MKR: For me the most difficult part was finding the balance with my family. I was in a point in my life, in my mid-40's when I started this, that I knew that this was the road I wanted to go down, that I had finally found what I wanted to do. My kids were grown and I finally had time. The hard part for me was getting them to share my passion and understand why this was so very important to me at this point. Up until this time, I had been wife and mother. And now it is "Mary Kay as business owner". They have never seen me wear that hat, they had never seen me act that way. When I went into that mode, the business woman mode, it was a side to me that I don't think they had seen before. And it probably scared the living hell out of them! But it had to come out. Dealing with that whole piece of it was probably the biggest stresser. It wasn't an obstacle, but it was a stresser.

S: It sounds like it impacted your family and you.

MKR: Completely. I think anything like this has to. And that's the other piece of it! You, as an Accidental Pren-her, entrepreneur, you have got to know that going into it. How am I going to hand this piece of it? And you have to know that this is going to come. Especially if you are a mom, if you've got children and a husband who may or may not understand that this is what is going to happen here. Mom's going to change a little bit, so let's be prepared for it. Don't let that hit you, because if they fight it, you have to figure out how to deal with that. You've always got to figure out how am I am going to over-come this? If you can identify that this could be a potential obstacle, you can try to fix this and talk to it before it becomes an issue.

S: In deed. Well Mary Kay, we are almost at the end of our interview, and we're at the last five questions that we ask everyone. What is the one word describes your life today?

MKR: Managed chaos.

S: What quality or characteristic is most important to you?

MKR: Persistence.

S: What is the least appealing thing that you do as a small business owner?

MKR: I can't think of anything. I love everything that I do, I'm sorry!

S: No, that's fabulous! Who, or what, inspires your success?

MKR: My little victories.

S: What's the most precious thing you've learned along the journey from Accidental-Pren-her to entrepreneurial woman?

MKR: I would say that the most precious thing really was how to identify and connect with the inner samurai that you talk about in your book.

S: Connecting to that inner knower, it is all so important.

MKR: Very important!

S: Mary Kay, once again, thanks for being here. We really appreciate your

time. Tell our listeners and our readers how they can get in touch with you. And I know that you have a really great special to offer them, so tell us how to get that.

MKR: I do! Right now, if you go to the website, [www.kubit2me.com](http://www.kubit2me.com), and type in the coupon code "wwmag" you will get 20% off anything you purchase on the Kubit2me website. And the best way to get a hold of me is through email at [marykay@kubit2me.com](mailto:marykay@kubit2me.com).

S: Mary Kay, thank you again! Ladies and gentlemen, head on over! It's [www.kubit2me.com](http://www.kubit2me.com) and it's 20% off all online orders. And the coupon code is "wwmag". Thank you Mary Kay!

MKR: Thank you Susan! It's been a pleasure. I really appreciate it.

S: You're welcome!