



A Story

By Michael
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FOR TELEVISION

KIMBERLY BELCHER COWIN, OWNER OF
PINK SNEAKERS PRODUCTIONS

»» If a reality-television show were to be done about Kimberly Belcher Cowin's career and company, it likely would be called "Life in the Fast Lane." After all, Cowin has gone from 1997 University of Florida grad and MTV intern to owner/executive producer of Pink Sneakers Productions faster than you can say, "Lights, camera, action."

Her company develops and produces original programming — reality shows and documentaries — for various networks, including VH1, MTV and ABC. Current works include reality shows "My Big Fat Fabulous Wedding" (VH1) and "Hogan Knows Best" (VH1), along with the documentary series, "True Life: I'm In An Interfaith Relationship" (MTV).



PHOTOS BY PHELAN EBENHACK

two series a year for MTV and some other networks.

T How has that vision changed?

kc Each year, we want to feel like we have grown or done something to challenge ourselves in a different way than the year prior. For 2008, it looks like we'll be doing an additional series, and last year was our first series for another new network. Really, the goal is to continue growing and continue doing projects that are quality and that get high ratings.

T Has any part of the business surprised you in the past seven years?

kc How quickly the company grew. When I was at Universal Studios, renting cubicles [after moving the business out of her home], we kept adding on and, finally, it was like, "Wow, we really need to move and get our space." As far as the projects, it was just a matter of people liking to do business with people who are very buttoned up and cross their Ts and dot their Is, and deliver quality, high-ratings projects. Once you start doing that and people start doing business with you, you develop those relationships. Then they want to do more. I just had no idea it would be so quick.

T You've been able to capture the state of youth and pop culture through reality TV. Do you think the popularity of reality TV will ever die?

kc It may slow down a little here or there. But the foundation of reality television is documentaries, and people are always going to be intrigued by other people. That's just the bottom line, whether it's morphed into more of an entertainment version of the documentary style of programming. It's still that people are curious and intrigued by interesting people.

What began as a three-person, home-based hope has grown into a go-to, one-stop, turnkey enterprise, with its own facility in Apopka, Florida that houses 10 edit suites, an audio suite, and some 60 to 80 people on the payroll in any given week.

And Cowin, who turns 33 in April, is far from ready to call it a wrap. The plot, she says, is just now thickening.

T Texture: What type of vision did you have at the start of Pink Sneakers?

kc Kimberly Belcher Cowin: The initial vision was a little bit smaller than what it has grown into. At the time, I had a lot of anxiety and fear about leaving New York. In this business, there are maybe two or three other production companies that don't exist in New York or L.A., doing the same type of reality television that we do. So, at the time, I was satisfied with just doing one or

T What is the secret to your success?

kc It's attitude. If you're going to be spending the majority of the hours of your days at work, people want to enjoy what they're doing. The hours are long and grueling and crazy sometimes, but we've tried to build an environment where we're having fun. One person with a bad attitude can make everyone's experience not so much fun.

T What are you most proud of?

kc I guess I'm most proud of our intern and apprentice program. We work with a lot of the colleges and universities throughout the state of Florida. We'll recruit and train the college students. I've modeled my experience at MTV, which was always about giving young people a lot of opportunity to grow. A lot of our producers started out as interns.

T What have been the toughest challenges?

kc I would say our biggest challenge is that when you have young people who work for you, they think the grass is always greener. So, they are lured to New York or L.A., after we spent years training them. I'm convinced that it will come full circle and that they'll want to move back to Florida.

T Earlier you mentioned that you had a reluctance to move from New York yourself. So, why Central Florida?

kc My family and my roots are in Central Florida, and my husband and his entire family are from Florida. I love Florida. If I could live anywhere, I'd pick Florida. Going anywhere but New York and L.A. is a challenge in this business. But everything clicked. We had a lot of good luck and good people. That's really the biggest asset — the people that I've been able to find here. **x**