

Business Interviews

# Interview with Jo Jo Harder, Founder and CEO at America's Top Dog Model

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Starting a business is a big achievement for many entrepreneurs, but maintaining one is the larger challenge. There are many standard challenges that face every business whether they are large or small. It is not easy running a company, especially in a fast-paced, ever-changing business world. Technology advances, new hiring strategies, and now, political changes coming with the new administration, all add to the existing business challenges that entrepreneurs, business owners, and executives have to deal with.

Maximizing profits, minimizing expenses and finding talented staff to keep things moving seem to be top challenges for both SMBs and large corporations. We have been interviewing companies from around the world to discover what challenges they are facing in their businesses. We also asked each company to share business advice they would give to a younger version of themselves.

Below is our interview with Jo Jo Harder, Founder and CEO at [America's Top Dog Model](#):

### **What does your company do?**

America's Top Dog Model ® luxury brand is recognized for its winning style! We offer signature products through retail and our online store, dog modeling resources, support for animals in need, and a national contest that "celebrates dogs that make a difference" in people's lives, which is our mission. America's Top Dog Model ® contest launches the modeling career of one national winner and eleven finalist who are featured in our annual calendar and receive international press. Headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, America's Top Dog Model ® brand was launched in 2005.

## **What is your role? What do you enjoy most about your role?**

I'm the CEO and founder of America's Top Dog Model. I've had the privilege of wearing many hats in my lifetime as a model, flight attendant, fashion designer, stylist and author. A devout dog lover who is mom to Italian Greyhound Romeo, I made the transition to the world of doggie glamour by creating America's Top Dog Model ® Contest that honors dogs that make a difference. In addition, I have written two books on this subject: Diva Dogs: A Style Guide to Living the Fabulous Life, and the acclaimed How to Become a Top Dog Model. It is incredibly rewarding to be able to combine my love for animals and fashion, and create a brand that supports animal charities and brings people together by bridging differences. Dogs remind people that no matter how divided they are, humans share a common bond grounded on goodness and humanity.

## **What are the biggest challenges in your business right now?**

Our biggest challenge at the moment is finding a home for America's Top Dog Model ® reality TV series which is in development. In 2014, I wrote, developed, and produced America's Top Dog Golden Paw Awards. The show was filmed in front of a live studio audience as the commencement for our reality TV series, airing on WPTV-5 (West Palm Beach) and The Esquire Network.

It included a reception, canine walks down the red carpet, and an award ceremony, honoring 15 contest winners and finalists, who with the aid of their humans, have supported community events and charities nationwide. The show acknowledged these dogs that made a difference in an extraordinary way. We believe that America's Top Dog Model ® reality series will undoubtedly enlighten viewers and translate to a global audience who love dogs.

## **If you could go back in time, what business advice would you give to a younger version of yourself?**

Create a business plan that sets out the future strategy and financial development of your company covering a period of several years. Strengthen your support system by cultivating contacts in the television and film industry. Also, identify key people, such as mentors, colleagues, entrepreneurs, friends, and family members that you can call for guidance.

You need people you can count on to commiserate and help you brainstorm solutions. Reality Television has become a viable genre for new writers, creators and everyday people with great ideas to break into the Industry, but it takes time. Constantly refer to your business plan in order to stay on track and remain inspired.

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