

7.1: Chapter Introduction

Elegant Touch



Figure 7.1.1: Used with permission from Anita Bruscino.

Anita Bruscino, the sole proprietor of [Elegant Touch](#), began her career as a mechanical engineer. She worked in her family's manufacturing business until she and her father left because of too many factions in the company. This provided her with the opportunity to start her own business, something she had always known in her heart that she wanted to do.

Anita was inspired to open a gift shop by a family friend who had owned her own gift shop. She gave Anita advice on starting her own business, and Elegant Touch opened in 1994. Anita has since expanded the business and is celebrating the shop's eighteenth anniversary, with the last six years in its larger location. The shop is warm, lovely, and comfortable, featuring unique gifts for all occasions and specializing in American handcrafted gift items and gift baskets. Shoppers will also find maternity gifts, items for the sweet tooth, specialty foods, special seasonal sections. Leslie Hutchison, "Elegant Touch Fine Gifts," *CheshirePatch*, accessed March 24, 2012, cheshire.patch.com/listings/elegant-touch-fine-gifts.—and a friendly smile from Anita. One thing that you will not find at Elegant Touch is what you find in other gift shops in her market area. When selecting products for her shop, Anita asks vendors whether other stores in the area carry the gift line she is considering. She will not carry duplicates. She likes to see new things and follows the trade magazines to help her do that. When asked how she chooses the products to carry, she described the process as instinctive—"from the gut."

Anita describes her customer demographics as mostly women, between thirty and seventy years old, married, and established with a home. Because many of her customers are repeat customers, the reason for fresh products is clear. A stale product line is not something that she can afford. Her pricing strategy is consistent with common practice in the industry, but many of her customers have commented that she delivers very high value for the prices she charges. She is not interested in selling online because she does not want to expand any further. She is at a nice comfort level and does not want to deal with additional inventory implications or the need to hire additional employees. As a result, the Elegant Touch website is for basic information only. In promoting Elegant Touch, Anita says that word of mouth works the best. She advertises in the local paper occasionally, supports local events, and is preparing for her first e-mail blast. She is exploring a Facebook presence but is not yet convinced that it will be of much value to her business.

Like all small businesses, Elegant Touch has been impacted by the ups and downs in the economy, with some times being tougher than others. Because Anita has only two part-time employees, however, she has not been faced with the employee layoffs that have hit other small companies. When asked what keeps her going in the rough times, she answered, "You have to love it." Just walk into her gift shop, and you will see clearly that she does. Except for the content from CheshirePatch.com, all information herein is based on an interview with Anita Bruscino, owner of Elegant Touch, March 2, 2012.

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