

Shopping For JOY



TV hosts Anna & Kristina believe in breaking the rules
and putting products – and life – to the test!

By: Anna Wallner and Kristina Maticic

Kristina: Anna and I had been working together for a few years at *Global News* in Vancouver when we decided to embrace our entrepreneurial spirit and start our own business. I have to admit, I didn't really like doing the news. It's not a very joyful business. In fact, I remember the day that Anna came to me and said, "You really don't seem very happy here, and a lot of people are starting to comment on it." That was a wake-up call. I needed to get out and do something else as I was turning into someone I didn't like very much.

Anna: We were actually sitting in the newsroom when we started to discuss what that "something else" could be. Then we started going for coffee or drinks and that led to writing down ideas. We were both educated and experienced in journalism and also shared a keen passion for getting just the right product for the job at hand, whether that product be a skirt, a chef's knife or a car. It was that combination that set the wheels in motion for what is now, almost 15 years later, Worldwide Bag Media Inc. We produce our own TV shows as well as shows we're not on. We've recently relaunched www.annaandkristina.com, and we've started our own line of products. It seems like a no-brainer now, but at the time we started, walking out the door from a job I'd worked so hard to get was no easy task.

Kristina: Tell me about it! Leaving a steady, decently paying union job is pretty daunting. There goes the security blanket. But that said, nothing is ever easy and any change of career comes with a set of pressures. For us, the big change is that now, everything rests on our shoulders. If we don't come up

with new ideas, we don't work and we don't get paid. But being in control of your own work destiny is very powerful. It has definitely made us work harder.

Anna: I have learned a very important lesson about myself over the course of my career, which is that I am much more creative and productive when there are no guarantees. When I started in the news business, I worked freelance before landing a full-time job and I was much hungrier before I started getting that guaranteed pay cheque. Running our own company is very similar to working freelance. We need to continually come up with new concepts. We have to stay one step ahead of the game if we're going to stay relevant and stay in business. It's high pressure indeed but it's what gets me up in the morning. I don't mind working on a Saturday night or pulling long hours because I find excitement in the pressure to keep our engine running.

Kristina: When we started, we knew all about TV (or we thought we did anyway), but we didn't know much about running a business. And that's actually one of the greatest advantages of taking a risk when you're young – you really don't know what you don't know! We never doubted we could do it and we had absolutely no idea of the challenges that lay ahead. If I could offer advice to anyone going down a similar path, I would say, "You should never be afraid to ask questions." We've learned that there's no one road to follow – that just because something is usually done one way, it doesn't mean we have to do it that way. You have to create your own path.

Anna: I think that's key. Doing things the way everyone else does them just because that's the established way has never worked for us. We believe in calling it like we see it and finding our own way through. That is the authentic approach. And when something is authentic, be it a product, a service or an overall brand, it generally leads somewhere positive. That's what has worked for us, anyway. And if you look at any successful business or idea, there's usually a great story behind it. You truly have to believe in what you're doing to find real success. And success doesn't necessarily come in the form of dollars. True success is finding joy.

Kristina: One thing I love about our day-to-day work is that we don't spend a lot of time stuck behind a desk from nine to five. Sure, there is some of that. But when we are working on one of our programs we are often doing some pretty interesting things. Fishing for cod in Newfoundland, for example. Riding camels in Morocco. Or spending three days baking a three-tier cake for a wedding. These are moments when I forget that I'm working, when I'm immersed in the experience.

Anna: I would never have done well behind a desk all day. I absolutely love the variety of my schedule. Sometimes we're on the road for weeks and on camera a lot which means I'm constantly on the move, under pressure, getting my hair and makeup done and having to be "on" all the time. Then everything changes and we shift into concept creation mode when I don't have to care about what I'm wearing and everything gets much quieter and slower. The constant changing keeps everything fresh and keeps me smiling. The other part of my job I love is working with someone I can be really honest with and would trust (and have trusted!) with my life.



Photo Courtesy: Erich Saide Photography

Photo Courtesy: Erich Saide Photography



Kristina: We aren't just business partners; we are also friends. And while of course that isn't always easy, there are so many positives. It's great to have support, someone to bounce ideas off of – someone to rely on. When we're pitching a show to a broadcaster, for example, if I stumble, I know Anna is there to jump right in and finish my thought for me. Honestly, sometimes I think we can read each other's minds. Traveling for business can be exhausting, but traveling with your best friend can be a lot of fun. Sharing the entire experience with someone is very rewarding.

Anna: We have had so many hilarious and memorable times on the road. Of course there are painful experiences: the canceled flights, the technical problems, the weather that doesn't cooperate, the crew issues, the important meetings that just don't go well. After the fact, those difficult times are often funnier than when everything goes right because having someone to help you laugh about it and laugh at yourself ultimately creates a feeling of unity and acceptance.

Kristina: Anna and I are quite different people but we do share a couple of very important traits. One, we do not give up. And two, we don't spend a lot of time dwelling on the negative. Sure, we get down, we get upset or feel defeated. But we always pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and carry on. Being in this partnership really helps with that, because we are there to support each other and prop each other up when need be.



Anna: I can't even count the number of times we've called each other at night and begun the conversation with, "I just need to rant" I feel incredibly lucky to be able to call the person who understands me the best, and get it all out. I always feel a million times better after one of those rants. Then I'm ready for whatever is going to come tomorrow.

Kristina: We've all heard it said that you should do what you love. I think it's also really important, if you can, to work with people you love. We have a great development team that we work with to create new shows. Our meetings are so dynamic, boisterous and engaging! And when we're shooting a show, we're surrounded by a small team who we spend a lot of time with – when we get that magic combination, the right people all working together, I completely forget that I'm at work. It just feels like I'm hanging out with a great group of people.

Anna: I love it when I feel like I'm surrounded by people who are smarter than me. That's when I know I'm in the right place! When it comes to finding joy in work, everything that surrounds your actual work is so important. The time you spend sitting in traffic, the air quality in your office, your freedom to work flexible hours and, of course, the people around you, all play major roles in helping you find joy at work. As I do this interview I'm in my pajamas, the dog is at my feet and I'm drinking a mug of tea. But I could just as easily be answering from a noisy set or from an airplane. You never know where I'll be on a Tuesday morning and I love that variety. That variety creates balance.



Kristina: Naturally, if you're overworked and stressed out, it's pretty difficult to feel joyful. So balance is incredibly important to us. Even though our BlackBerrys are always on, we totally respect each other's (and our team members') need to decompress and disconnect. We work hard, but we also value our time off and make an effort to spend quality time with our families and our friends.

Anna: When I'm on "holiday" (like Kristina said, our BlackBerrys are never off), that's when I find my greatest inspiration and ideas! I love getting out and seeing the world, seeing what other people are doing and how it relates to what we do.



Kristina: I experience a lot of joy from the little things in life and I often find more happiness in the quiet times than the boisterous times. I love savouring the perfect cup of coffee, walking my dog on a crisp morning, reading a good book or enjoying a chilled glass of wine at the end of the day. These are the moments when I feel peace and gratitude for what I have in my life.

Anna: Excellent. Can you walk my dog this weekend?



Kristina Maticic is the CEO and one of the founding partners of Worldwide Bag Media Inc., a leader in lifestyle and reality entertainment television. She is one of the creators, hosts and executive

producers of the hit series "**Anna & Kristina's Grocery Bag**", "**Anna and Kristina's Beauty Call**", and "**The Shopping Bags**". In addition to growing the A&K programming arm, Kristina also serves as executive producer on all other WBM shows, including the health program "**Buy.o.logic**" on OWN Canada and the adventure food show "**Get Stuffed**" on OLN.

After receiving a Bachelor of Arts from the University of British Columbia and a Masters in Journalism from the University of Southern California, Kristina spent six years at Global TV's Vancouver station, first as an overnight news anchor and then as the news anchor and producer of the 11:30 pm newscast. While at Global, Kristina met Anna and they hatched the concept for "**The Shopping Bags**" and have been creating entertaining and award-winning lifestyle content ever since. Their website www.annaandkristina.com relaunched in November 2012 and continues to draw tens of thousands of unique visits every month.



Anna Wallner is the president and a founding partner of Worldwide Bag Media Inc., a leader in lifestyle and reality entertainment television. Co-creator, host, and executive producer of the hit series

"**Anna & Kristina's Grocery Bag**", "**Anna & Kristina's Beauty Call**", and "**The Shopping Bags**", Anna continues to focus on growing the A&K brand. She also serves as executive producer on all other WBM shows, including the consumer health program "**Buy.o.logic**" on OWN Canada, and the adventure food show "**Get Stuffed**" on OLN.

Anna received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of British Columbia and completed the graduate journalism program at the University of King's College in Halifax. In 1994, she returned to Vancouver to begin her television career for Global News, where she spent five years as a reporter and anchor. Anna was voted Broadcaster of Tomorrow by the BC Broadcasters Association in 1999 and in 2000 she was nominated for the prestigious Webster award for her work as a health reporter. Anna and Kristina came up with the idea for "**The Shopping Bags**" in 1999 and have been leaders in lifestyle entertainment ever since. With her breadth of experience in front of and behind the camera, and her leadership skills as president, Anna, along with co-founder Kristina, is spearheading Worldwide Bag Media Inc. into becoming a top production company in Canada.