GT INTERVIEW

Suzanne Davis
Notables Stationers
Edmonton, Alberta

Being an independent retailer is a challenge at any time, in any category. But try being an independent purveyor of stationery, invitations, greeting cards and other accoutrements of the written word in the age of hi-tech. Suzanne Davis, owner of Notables Stationers Inc. in Edmonton, Alberta, has weathered the email/texting/cell phone storm that has swept the category. In fact, Notables celebrated its 25th anniversary on June 21, 2011. We think that's a notable achievement by any measure. ~ *Lori Smith, Editor*

Gifts and Tablewares: *Who or what inspired you to be a retailer?*

Suzanne Davis: I grew up in retail. We had a chain of retail automotive stores so I was punching a cash register before I could reach it. And I worked retail all through high school and university. I was a sales manager with Eaton's as well. It's what I know and love.

GT: *Describe your store in one word.*

SD: Classic

GT: *Describe your leadership/ management style in one word.*

SD: Hands-on.

GT: *What makes you a good retailer?*

SD: The fact that I'm always willing to learn, and that I know I have to take chances which may mean making mistakes. I'm also a hard worker.

GT: *What has been your greatest challenge on the road to retail success?*

SD: I guess the greatest challenge would just be to continue to stay flexible and be prepared to change and learn. Also, keeping up with technology. I can tweet and Facebook better than most of my young staff!!

GT: *In terms of products, what was your "best buy"?*

SD: Surprisingly, it was not even stationery. Seven years ago we expanded into the fine jewellery category and it has been very good to us.

GT: *What quality do you most value in an employee?*

SD: Common sense.

GT: *Thinking about your business, what is your present state of mind?*

SD: I love my business. I'm proud of it but after 25 years I'm also ready for a change personally and that's scary.

GT: *What about your business keeps you awake at night?*

SD: Not too much other than my management staff evaluations because I'm not good at them. My manager makes me do them.

GT: *What makes being a retailer worthwhile?*

SD: Being my own boss even though I'm a tough one--probably toughest on myself.