

There's an app for that



WHO: Tara O'Connell, mum to Jacob, 13, and Alexander, two.
WAS: CEO of a not-for-profit group.
NOW: Director of The Baby Diaries (www.thebabydiaries.com.au).

The Baby Diaries is an app developed to help busy parents and carers keep track and share information about bub's daily feeds (breast, bottle, bowl), sleeps and nappy routines, as well as milestones, medical notes and photos.

When did the idea strike?

After Alexander was born I expected to replace with an app the pen and paper I had used to record Jacob's daily activities 11 years earlier. Tracking feed times, breast sides and bottles, introducing solids and monitoring reactions, and keeping a log of milestones had been a job in itself back in 2001! I found some apps that did some of the things I needed, but nothing offering the full suite of activities I was looking for. I've always loved innovation, so I decided to try my hand at developing my own app.

"Keeping a log of milestones had been a job in itself back in 2001!"

TARA O'CONNELL is helping parents keep track of all bub's important info, from medical records to milestones, with her app, The Baby Diaries

Starting out

Having a great idea for an app is one thing, but developing an app and getting it to market is something else altogether (especially when I had suddenly become the sole parent of a 12-week-old baby). The first challenge was finding the right team of people to support my idea. Fortunately this was achieved quickly, however the quote was double my budget! So the next challenge was finding an investment partner. Marketing and branding agency Out of the Square Media could see the potential and agreed to come on board as partners as well as providing their services.

Spreading the word

We started by building a strong social media presence and sending press releases to print, radio and TV outlets. We were fortunate to get some great exposure for very little cost.

And now?

The Baby Diaries app has now been downloaded in every continent, is available in 15 languages, and was listed in the BornOnline 2013 'Top 10 must-have apps for new parents'. The challenge now is ensuring timely app updates and enhancements. Fortunately our initial budget planning identified the need to have a 'revolving fund', where app sales would fund updates over the first two years. We recently identified an opportunity to create a 'Plus' version, allowing data transfer between parents and carers. RockMyBaby International Nanny Agency has recently started using our app for in-home childcare, too. I'd love to eventually launch a version for

childcare centres, however we'll need a few more sales before the budget will allow it.

How do your kids fit in?

Alexander was very young when I started, so I hired a nanny and worked from home so that I'd be able to breastfeed and be close to him. He now attends daycare. Jacob is in high school and seems to think it's pretty cool that his mum has developed an app!

The best bits

I love that I've created a product that helps other mums all over the world. For the first time in my career, I can also say I've found the perfect work/life balance.

The hardest part

I have an extroverted personality, so I really need to be able to talk through ideas with others. Working from home could potentially stifle that, so I make sure I'm actively reaching out to other people through events, social media, and coffee catch-ups. ☆

