

DREAM JOBS

CAN BE A REALITY



It's easy to fantasize about a dream job, but making it a reality takes courage, perseverance and hard work. Here's how three women turned their dreams into successful, satisfying careers.

By Ivy Gracie

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GIA AMELLA

43, Filmmaker

Currently filming: *And They Came to Chicago: The Italian American Legacy*.

Airing on WTTW and WMAQ in early 2007

Describe your job. First, I'd say I'm a television producer doing non-fiction programming. But now I try to stick with a catchall term because I'm doing everything, so probably 'executive producer' which implies dealing with the money end. I'm not only responsible for the creative vision and

execution of a program, but also for finding investors, advertisers and sponsors. That's something I've had to really get into. I'm creative, I'm not a salesperson by trade.

Tell us about your new role as salesperson. I have doubts that because I'm working in an artistic capacity, people think

I'm this 'wacky filmmaker' with a 'wacky vision.' I feel that I must jump that extra hurdle to show that I'm serious about what I do. I'm building a business; this is serious stuff. I'm cutting two shows—a one-hour version for WMAQ and a longer version for WTTW. Our budget is higher than other

...When you're in control of the product—you took a little pearl of an idea and you're nurturing it—it really does feel amazing.

commercial television budgets I've worked with; it's public television, it's a longer show, it's High Definition and there's a DVD attached to it. I wouldn't want to do this on a shoestring budget because I'd risk losing quality and I'm not willing to do that. I'm not willing to put my reputation on the line. Now that WMAQ and WTTW are my partners, [it's like] I'm holding up the mountain!

How did you get two stations to agree to air the same show?

Maybe it's just my personality—I wanted to be diplomatic about it. I remember meeting with executives from both WTTW and WMAQ and everybody was smiling. They said, 'Why can't a commercial station and a public television station get together and present the program? It means a bigger audience, it's unusual, it's unprecedented, let's do it.'

Sometimes I don't know why they're so interested in this show. There's some kind of magic about it— anything associated with Italy is so interesting and in vogue. High fashion, architecture, la dolce vita, the whole mystique— it's compelling. I think it's going to be a good sell for other markets.

You sound like a businesswoman now!

My husband and I formed Modio Media, a LLC (Limited Liability Company) around owning the show and the rights to it. I have a full-time associate producer too. If you have too much overhead you're really chasing the dollar.

What propels you? The point of this show is to preserve a piece of our history that's about to be lost. If we don't have the voices out there to put forth our culture, who'll preserve it? I truly believe if we weren't doing the show now, it would never happen.

You appear to shift gears more frequently than most. This has been one of the most stressful years of my life. I've had to

