

BIZ 101

RHYTHM NATION:

Alecia Cohen converted her world-music magazine from local newsletter to glossy niche hit.



Start the Presses

PUBLISHING A MAGAZINE MAY SEEM LIKE A DREAM, BUT THESE ENTREPRENEURS MADE IT A REALITY.

BY NICHOLE L. TORRES

WANT TO BE AT THE HELM OF THE NEXT *Vogue*, *Car and Driver*, *Field & Stream* or *Entrepreneur* magazine? There's nothing like the exquisite joy of seeing your name on a newsstand, especially if you're the publisher of a magazine that covers your favorite subject—whether it's music, shopping, collecting or world issues.

Though the magazine industry is not easy to be in, it's definitely an exciting ride. Even with all the challenges of the magazine world, the

number of titles continues to grow. According to data from the *National Directory of Magazines*, there were 17,254 consumer magazines in the United States in 2003—up from 14,302 a decade earlier. And though much of the market is dominated by a few large players, there's still room for the independent startup.

Alecia J. Cohen, publisher and CEO of *Global Rhythm* magazine, found her niche with an independent world-music magazine. Founded in 1992 as a newsletter from her hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts, it was initially a black-and-white publication distributed for free at local Tower Records stores and other independent music stores. As the world-music genre began to gain a bigger following, Cohen, at the urging of Tower,

MAGAZINE PUBLISHING 101

1 Study your niche. "Newcomers often overlook this step because they focus on how different their magazine is going to be and resist looking for how they can make it fit into the expectations of their prospective customers," says Cheryl Woodard, president of The Publishing Business Group and author of *Starting & Running a Successful Newsletter or Magazine*. "You never start completely from scratch, so it's important to know the playing field before you jump into it."

2 Find advertisers who are aligned with your mission. Especially if you plan to push the envelope editorially, you need to seek out advertisers who don't mind placing ads in a potentially controversial publication.

3 Know your subject. From home improvement to health and beauty, if you're not an expert in your niche, you probably won't find a clear editorial voice for your magazine. Says Woodard, "I have a client who is a corporate lawyer and started a magazine for that niche because he knew the existing ones were outdated."

4 Know what you're in for. The magazine publishers we talked to discussed how much more difficult it is to keep a magazine going than it is to start one. Says *Global Rhythm* publisher Alecia J. Cohen, "It's a huge commitment. You're always in production; you're always working on the next issue. In publishing, there's no opportunity to push [things] back—it messes up your distribution schedule. You just have to keep [the magazine] coming out." —N.L.T.