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What do you think about when you're stuck in the hospital for weeks with your leg in a full hip-to-toe cast? Kathy Masera was in this predicament after a skiing accident in 1982, and she decided it was time to launch her own business. "I knew I couldn't drive to and from work, and felt this was as good a time as any to launch my idea," she says.

Her idea was to start California Job Journal Inc., a weekly newspaper insert containing a select and detailed list of job opportunities. The insert is currently carried in 12 Northern California newspapers with a combined circulation of 295,000.

Masera's idea didn't come to her overnight. She actually put it together over her years managing two employment agencies, as well as from her experience as a placement counselor in a private college. In between she co-owned a public relations and graphic arts firm for a year, until her partner bought her out and Masera went back into managing another employment agency.

From her work at the college, it occurred to Masera that most students were a lot more motivated to find a job if they were responsible for placing themselves. Instead of placing each student individually, Masera started putting out lists categorizing the available jobs, posted them on the bulletin boards, and let the students handle their job search from there. "The placement rate of the school went from 68 percent to 86 percent in just six months," she says. "I found that statistic very intriguing.

Masera left the employment agency, and with partner Clayton Babcock, started her own business out of one bedroom, with two desks, two telephones and a computer.

This was the start of a baby monster that gradually swallowed up Masera's entire home. As the paper and staff grew, so did the work space – to two other bedrooms, the dining room, the kitchen, the garage, and the living room. There was a copy machine in the middle of the living room; three or four people worked at the dining room table; the wet bar was a mailing machine center; and the upstairs bathroom served as a conference room! "It was sometimes the only place where nobody was working," laughs Masera.

Sometimes, the crowded house was a problem. At one point, Masera was sick, but had nowhere to go. She ended up booking a hotel room for two nights until she recovered. "I didn't want to expose other people to it, and I couldn't wander into

the kitchen to get some juice, so room service seemed to be the appropriate solution," she says. "But it just shows, you can find solutions to your problems." When her board of directors visited the business a few years ago, they suggested putting a trailer in the back yard, and converting the entire house into a business office.

Actually, Masera and Babcock looked for an office building on two separate occasions, and even signed a five-year lease on the second one. But each time, they backed off, unsure of the landlords' integrity. "The first time, we just returned home and converted the garage into a production area," says Masera. "The second time, a year or so later, we had to sell all the upstairs furniture to make room for more office space."

In March 1987, Job Journal Inc. finally moved into a 5,200-square-foot commercial space. While conceding that it was time to move, Masera doesn't regret using her home as an office for five years. "By keeping the overhead so low, it allowed us the opportunity to make some mistakes that could have brought us under if we had the overhead we have now," Masera explains. "Besides, I miss intertwining the business and personal parts of my life. I could work late, and still do the wash and feed the dog!"