

Burts Bees Story

- Speaker 1: Raw, honest, revealing. The stories hitting home from Wall Street to Main Street. Award winning journalist, David Faber, hosts CNBC's Business Nation. We now return to the CNBC news magazine, Business Nation.
- David: Our monthly feature, How I Made My Millions, begins tonight deep in the north woods of Maine. In 1984, Roxanne Quimby was a single mother and struggling artist who had moved there to live the simple life, sleeping in a cabin without running water or electricity. She might still be in that cabin if she hadn't met a beekeeper named Burt.
- Roxanne: He was known as Burt the Bee Man. There he was with a beard that was never trimmed and he was selling honey by the side of the road in gallon containers.
- David: Roxanne looked at that honey and beeswax and knew somehow, some way, she could turn it into gold.
- Roxanne: We struck up a partnership that depended on my artistic talent for packaging and making labels and signs and his ability to keep bees and produce thousands of pounds of honey in a season and beeswax. The obvious first choice was candles. Once I got beyond the \$20,000 a year goal, I thought, "Okay, this has wings, right? Just like the bees, I could make this fly."
- David: Before long, Burt's Bees was buzzing, doing \$3,000,000 a year in sales. Roxanne kept tinkering.
- Roxanne: Sometimes the most inventive, creative ideas come out of accidents, serendipity. Who knows where they come from? They just fly in and, "Well, let's try that." One of those was lip balm. That was the pivotal product. I had a little recipe with beeswax and oil and some peppermint and heated it up on a sauce pan and put it in a little metal pouring cup.
- David: Roxanne realized that to grow Burt's Bees she'd have to leave Maine, so in 1994, she set up shop in North Carolina.
- Roxanne: Our first engineer started building lines so that our little lip balms could be filled without the kettles. Just put that little filler a little faster and the conveyor belt a little faster and that's called ramping up.
- David: Burt's Bees expanded into other natural products, all with Burt's authentic mug on the label.
- Roxanne: If we could put a face like this, this bearded hippie, on your beauty product, it's got to be good, right? It's got to be a good product.

David: In 1999, Roxanne bought out Burt's 30% share. He returned to Maine but his name and face remained on more than 150 skin care products with more than \$50,000,000 in sales.

Roxanne: I had put myself so much into it, I think I was starting to feel a little bit of burnout. At that point, I decided to look around for the exit door.

David: She found it. In 2003, Roxanne Quimby decided to sell 80% of Burt's Bees. Her payday was sweet as honey. \$177,000,000.

Roxanne: The way to make a million dollars, first and foremost, is to make it in your mind and totally believe that you have absolutely everything it takes, absolutely no doubt about it. That's how I did it and I would recommend it.

David: Roxanne Quimby took her riches back to the Maine woods. She spent more than \$40,000,000 of her own money to buy 80,000 acres of land there which she's hoping to donate for a national park. Burt, once a hippie, is now a rich hippie. He walked away with \$4,000,000.