

Use This Founder's Simple Email Strategy to Keep Burnout at Bay

Brooklinen's Vicki Fulop says you can't be at your best if you're constantly on call.



Image credit: Courtesy of Brooklinen



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Editor's Note: Entrepreneur's ["20 Questions"](#) series features both established and up-and-coming entrepreneurs and asks them a number of questions about what makes them tick, their everyday success strategies and advice for aspiring founders.

When you don't get enough rest, it affects everything from your mood to your health. And since sleep is so important, Vicki Fulop, co-founder of bedding startup [Brooklinen](#), wants to help make her customers are comfortable and refreshed without having to break the bank to get high quality sheets and bed linens.

In 2014, Fulop and husband Rich launched the company on Kickstarter, after getting the idea following a vacation where they stayed in a hotel that had incredibly soft sheets -- but if they wanted to get a set themselves, they would have to pay \$800.

The Fulops wanted to make beautiful and chemical-free home goods while being transparent about exactly where and how they were getting from the factory right to the customer's front door -- taking industry standards like wholesaling, storefronts and licensing fees out of the equation.

Their fans on Kickstarter agreed. While the pair initially asked for \$50,000 on the crowdfunding site, they ended up far exceeding their goal thanks to \$237,000 worth of preorders. Investors were also excited about the idea. In March 2017, the company raised raised \$10 million in funding.

We caught up with Fulop to ask her 20 Questions and find out what makes her tick.

(This interview was edited for brevity and clarity)

1. How do you start your day?

I start it with a cup of tea and by watching last night's recording of *What Happens Live* with Andy Cohen. I love Andy and his antics on the show, and it makes me laugh first thing in the morning. Then I read the news on my phone for 20 minutes. After that, I start getting ready for work, get dressed, shower and walk our dog if it's my turn, and then go into work.

2. How do you end your day?

The very last thing I do at the end of the day before I fall asleep is read for about 20 minutes. That's just something I've always done ever since I was a kid, probably from my mom reading to me when I was little. It helps me relax and drift off.

3. What's a book that changed your mind and why?

[*Shoe Dog*](#) by Phil Knight. It inspired, motivated and even supported me. And for anybody that doesn't know, it's the story of Nike and what he called his crazy idea and passion to what it is today. I think he is just a very intimate, funny, vulnerable and self-deprecating storyteller. And he's very relatable when he writes about his nerves before a big meeting or any manufacturing kerfuffles. The struggle to find balance between family and work. So it's very relatable and supportive in that way. And inspiring because you see him overcome all these challenges and have fun times along the way. [But you also] see the risks that he took to build the company into what it is today.

4. What's a book you always recommend and why?

[*Just Kids*](#) by Patti Smith. It's so heartbreaking, evocative and hilarious. It's a story of love and friendship and coming of age in a very creative and wild time in New York City. And she puts you in the room with some of the most fascinating artists and musicians from that time and kind of encapsulates the feeling of being young, wild and free.

5. What's a strategy to keep focused?

Big sound-proof headphones with music or rainforest sounds.

6. When you were a kid what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be three things from what I remember. A singer, but I can't sing, so that didn't work out. I wanted to be an actress and I would rope my friends into performing plays with me. Then we graduated to music videos to [music from] the Spice Girls and Ace of Base. This was in the early 90s. And fashion designer, and I think I've gotten kind of close to that. When I look back the think that they had a common theme in that I always loved storytelling.

7. What did you learn from the worst boss you ever had?

I don't think anybody is just the worst. We're all people just trying to figure things as we go along. I try not to give anybody too hard of a time.

8. Who has influenced you most when it comes to how you approach your work?

My mom. She's also one of the most level headed, rational people that I know. She is amazing at unpacking challenges or problems in unique ways. I'm not as good as she is at that yet, but she just can find ways to tackle things in a new perspective. She is the guiding light or principle that I follow and aspire to be like at work.

9. What's a trip that changed you?

We were hiking in Yosemite and took a trip to visit the national park. We were doing a really strenuous hike, and it sounds cliché, but it just had an impact on being able to scale the mountain one step at a time and have that feeling that anything is possible. The tenacity and patience I needed to struggle through that hard hike, along with the mental and physical cleanse I felt from accomplishing that felt to me like what I've heard the runner's high described as.

10. What inspires you?

Travel inspires me. That's where I get to step away and look at things from a new perspective, kind of see the forest through the trees. Many trips inspire new collections for Brooklinen. And it can be anything from architecture to nature, the aesthetics or colors of a new place. It will kind of turn on a light bulb in my head. And I think part of it is being able to step away and take in something new.

11. What was your first business idea and what did you do with it?

It was Brooklinen, and I pursued it.

12. What was an early job that taught you something important or useful?

It was an early job where I had to liaise between a lot of different parties. It taught me the value of follow up. You're not bothering someone if you follow up, if you reach out for help or to partner with someone. Taking a chance like that is so valuable and so many things have come to Brooklinen or we've done cool projects, because we were not afraid to reach out or email someone an extra time in case they didn't receive your email.

13. What's the best advice you ever took?

As long as you have your health and a good sense of humor everything's going to be okay.

14. What's the worst piece of advice you ever got?

To not do something because it's hard. You just have to find a way.

15. What's a productivity tip you swear by?

I use [Asana](#). Aside from personal prioritized task lists and calendars, which I use every day, Asana enables you to create shared projects for your team, and anyone within the project can assign tasks, share comments and relevant documents, and more. The platform also lets you set up boards, as a way of organizing tasks -- I love this feature for design projects, and the boards help my team visually move projects through request and approval stages. We also use Asana to collaborate on launches, keeping all work streams in one place. It's amazing for helping me and my team stay productive and organized.

16. Is there an app or tool you use in a surprising way to get things done or stay on track?

I use Siri on the go. I just ask her to make reminders for me, because if I don't put something in my calendar or literally have someone to remind me I will forget.

17. What does work-life balance mean to you?

Work-life balance to me means spending time with friends and family -- be it hanging out on the couch, going to an exhibit or flea market or something. Also, cutting off work at a certain time. My husband runs the company with me. We set up a time where we don't work -- we just do our regular couple stuff, like binge watch TV or go for a walk or cook together.

18. How do you prevent burnout?

I stop checking email at a certain time each evening. I'm pretty strict about that with myself, just to give my brain time to unplug. I schedule time to read emails and address anything pressing, and I'll try to let my team know when I'll be checking email so we can resolve stuff in buckets. So you're not feeling like you're always on and things are happening constantly throughout the day.

19. When you're faced with a creativity block, what's your strategy to get innovating?

If I'm in the building and I'm doing something on deadline, I take a walk. It does wonders. And I've read studies that walk stimulate creativity in your brain. I'll also listen to music.

20. What are you learning now?

I learn from our Brooklinen team and customers every day. And that's important because we're fortunate enough to have surrounded ourselves with really smart, creative and hardworking people. I want to listen, empower them and let their brilliant ideas come to the forefront and support them in executing those ideas. The same thing is from the customer. They are the people sleeping on the product and experiencing our business, our service our products, our advertisements and responding to it via email and social media. So, it's a constant listening, learning and analyzing, so that we can always serve them to the best of our ability and make things that make people happy.