



OUR WOMEN OF THE YEAR 2012

This year our pick of the leading businesswomen in Australia includes a scientist, a spa owner, an online entrepreneur, an accountant and more! They're a varied and impressive bunch.

BY JEN BISHOP

JENNIFER McCLOY, JENNIFER KATE

Jennifer launched her own fashion label in July 2010 while still working a full-time job. "It was hard work but so fun and very rewarding." She has only recently dropped her day job down to four days a week.

Jennifer is a true startup in every sense of the word. She was at a stage where she either needed to employ someone or sped more of her time on her business. "I wanted to really learn everything about the operation of my business and

know it all back to front. There is so much to learn, from government regulations and tax, efficient accounting and bookkeeping, website development and marketing my business, and that is even before I think about designing the next fashion line and dealing with the factories overseas!"

She was recently sitting at a restaurant in China, with two of her Chinese business contacts and her father ("the farmer from Young, NSW who was there to support me and make sure I didn't have a meltdown!") when she had her big 'how did I get here?' moment. "It was such an eclectic group!"

Jennifer has learned that working with friends where you can makes the whole experience much more enjoyable, to always ask for advice if you need it ("more often than not, someone will have a solution for you and you will be surprised how you will be able to return the favour for them one day,") and not to be afraid to talk about your ideas with others who you trust. "Honest, constructive feedback is your best friend!"



DANI LOMBARD, DANI LOMBARD PUBLIC RELATIONS

Dani Lombard recently celebrated five years in business. The founder and director of Dani Lombard Public Relations (DLPR), a boutique public relations agency specialising in consumer lifestyle brands.

After several years working for both big and small PR agencies in Australia and the US, Dani founded DLPR with the aim to combine the best of what she had learnt from both. Starting at her dining room table with a single client, DLPR was built on the premise of combining the premium service and counsel expected of a larger PR consultancy with the creativity, flair and willingness to push boundaries, often seen in boutique agencies.

Right from the outset Dani has been committed to working with brands she is passionate about and truly believes in, with a strong focus on organisations that have a positive impact on the world. She has steadily grown DLPR purely through referrals, carving out a niche in representing consumer lifestyle brands that have an ethical or pro-social edge. Her clients include Youngblood mineral makeup and organic skincare brand Yes To Carrots.

Prior to starting DLPR, Dani spent several years honing her skills in the beauty PR industry working as in house PR manager for start-up brand Tali by Tali Shine and as a publicist for Markson Sparks!, where she represented MaxFactor and CoverGirl. She also worked with the international PR consultancy Weber Shandwick in both Sydney and San Francisco.

When she is not talking the talk for her clients, Dani walks the walk to raise money for cancer research. She has raised more than \$25,000 in the past three years through running half marathons and her first marathon last year for the charity CanToo.

SCIENTIA PROFESSOR VEENA SAHAJWALLA, UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Growing up in India, Veena would walk past huge mountains of waste supporting communities of rubbish pickers and imagine what it would take to convert rubbish into something more valuable. And that's exactly what she has worked out how to do.

Women in science and the science behind business are not often given a platform. That all changed when Veena won a Telstra Business Women's Award in 2011.

She is helping the steel industry combat enormous environmental challenges. As Director at the Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology at UNSW, Veena developed technology to reduce carbon emissions during steel production and recycle end-of-life materials that would otherwise go to landfill. Traditionally, in electric arc furnace (EAF) steelmaking, scrap is reprocessed using large amounts of coke and coal as sources of carbon. After successful lab experiments which commenced in 2003, Veena collaborated with manufacturing giant OneSteel to develop technology to recycle plastic and rubber waste in the scrap reprocessing furnace.

The "green steel" technology not only produces lower emissions, but reduces reliance on coke and coal and requires less electricity. In addition, plastic and rubber waste are spared from landfill. The innovation has attracted science and technology awards in Australia and the United States and has the potential to transform steel production globally. No small feat.



HEIDI REID, CUSTOM TAN

Coming from a fashion background and living in Australia, Heidi was sick of seeing people baking themselves in the sun trying to achieve the perfect tan. Three months after leaving work for the birth of her first baby, she established a spray tan business. “I started by purchasing a cheap kit online, taught myself how, and then had flyers printed and walked the streets letter box dropping. I took pride in every appointment and worked hard to impress my clients. Within three months, I had 90 new spray tan clients, and decided I’d take my business further.”

She began importing the spray tan machinery, developed her own brand (Custom Tan) and ran ‘learn to spray tan’ workshops which she’d advertise on her self-built website. Two years later she found herself running workshops in four states and she’s now trained over 200 technicians in Australia and New Zealand.

At the end of last year, developed a self-tan range which has been covered in a number of leading magazines including Vogue, Grazia and Ok! “We’ve twice been voted Australia’s best self tan and I pinch myself every day. I have invested lots of money and I now need to start making it back.” She’s currently discussing export opportunities to New Zealand and the States. “I thoroughly enjoy multi-tasking my way through each 24 hours!”



MANDY SIGALOFF, CLUB QT

With the arrival of Zara, Gap, and Topshop down under, Australian shoppers are finally getting access to the international high street fashion they have been envying from across the world. But the real shopping revolution is taking place online at clubqt.com.au – a website which brings the best of the world’s fashion together in an exciting social shopping community.

Relocating to Australia from the UK in 2009, avid shopper Mandy Sigaloff was forced to leave behind her favourite European fashion brands and with a busy family lifestyle, she could barely find the time to browse through her long list of favourite online stores. And so the Club QT concept was hatched: what if Mandy could save herself the trouble of searching through every site, and instead browse every brand in one place? And find somewhere she could view style inspiration and fashion tips from other shoppers?

What followed was a 12-month crash course in website building, eCommerce and social media, and Mandy emerged in early 2011 as a fully-fledged online entrepreneur, creating her online aggregator Club QT in Beta and holding a soft launch to friends and advisors.

Choosing a name that implied exclusivity (“On the QT” is a term meaning keep it quiet), Club QT is an international shopping centre online, showcasing the best stores from Europe including Liberty of London, Harrods and Topshop, and placing them all in one stylish, navigation-friendly online boutique.

Mandy spent months researching her target market, finding out what they love and hate about online shopping; one complaint was prices being shown in

foreign currency. Club QT has all prices in Australian dollars, updated daily in accordance with exchange rates, and shipping costs are forecasted in local currency too.

She heard feedback that some shoppers begrudge hefty shipping costs, so Club QT works with international retailers to offer competitive and exclusive shipping rates for Australian consumers and runs limited free shipping offers regularly.

Mandy manages a small team of just three, using outside contractors when required. A private investor recently invested \$500,000 in to the project, allowing Mandy to bolster the site’s technology and implement an online and offline marketing strategy. With over 150 stores already listed on Club QT, Mandy’s next step is to entice Australian retailers to the site to take advantage of US and UK shopping spend and to place leading home grown designers and stores alongside their international counterparts.



“I was told by one factory not to bother with my idea as Qubies was going to fail. Well guess what? I’m still having the last laugh!”

JO HEIGHWAY, SMSF OUTSOURCE SOLUTIONS

“To audit the work of another accountant means I have to know superannuation law better than any other accountant – and lawyer – in Australia,” says Jo Heighway, who looks far too young and glamorous to be a working mother of four!

A decade after starting her accounting career with Deloitte, Jo decided to go out on her own at age 27 to be an accountant to accountants. She launched SMSF Outsource Solutions in 2005, auditing self-managed super funds in the front room of her home. Today, the Gosford-based business is one of the largest self managed super fund auditors in Australia, providing independent audits for around 3,000 accountants, advisors and trustees in every state in the country.

Now 33, and the winner of a Telstra Business Women’s Award last year, Jo has worked hard to earn the respect of large administrators at a young age through investment in continual education. Her knowledge must exceed that of the accountants and administrators she audits to ensure she can review records accurately, provide correct superannuation advice and report any compliance breaches.

With 2,500 new self-managed super funds emerging in Australia each month and new rules for independent auditors, Jo is currently working hard to ensure SMSF is well placed to capitalise on growth opportunities and future industry consolidation.



ALEXANDRA WARDLE, QUBIES

There seems to be a trend for women who have babies and then become entrepreneurs in order to solve a problem they’ve encountered as a new mum. Alexandra Wardle is one of them. Four years ago, she invented a clever little product called Qubies which is now stocked in major chains like Toys R Us.

“The new arrival of my first son back in 2006 was wonderful and like all new mums I wanted to do the best for my bub so when the time came to introduce solids I made all of his food and froze it into little ice cube trays to ensure I would have lots of healthy fresh food available as I needed it. In theory this was great. In practice this was a nightmare! Frozen pureed food becomes like cement and it’s nearly impossible to get out of an ice cube tray. So one day with a smashed ice cube tray, mash potato cubes flying around the room and me in tears, I decided

to invent my own ice cube tray for this purpose.

“It all began with phone calls trying to work out how to make an actual plastic product. I had absolutely no idea. Just six months prior I had been working in a real job that only required me to do as I was told. With baby in pram I made appointments and visited as many plastic manufacturing companies as I could. Talk about learning curve!”

It took 12 months of research and development to take Qubies to market. The first pilot run saw Alexandra with baby in pram (again) visiting as many baby stores as she could with samples. Now entering her fifth year of Qubies, business is booming. “It’s going to be a bumper year with growth forecast, new product in development and discussions with overseas buyers. I was told by one factory not to bother with my idea as Qubies was going to fail. Well guess what? I’m still having the last laugh!”

MELANIE GLEESON AND BELINDA FRASER, ENDOTA SPA

Ironically, the initial idea for Australia’s most stylish spa network was hatched over a humble snag.

Eight years had passed since the end of high school when Melanie and Belinda ran into each other at a mutual friend’s barbecue in 2000.

In those eight years, both women had traversed the world. Melanie had spent a year in Scotland, before returning to Melbourne to study theatrical hair and makeup.

After a few years in the beauty industry, she found herself managing one of Melbourne’s very first day spa, Georges on Collin, and witnessing firsthand the appeal of a spa. She saw the opportunity and decided to open the Mornington Peninsula’s first spa.

Meanwhile, Belinda had completed a degree in economics at Monash University, and headed off for a stint of overseas and interstate travel.

Returning to Melbourne, she got her real estate agent’s licence and was working in her

father’s business when she ran into Mel.

Belinda’s ambition was to start a business which she could grow into a national entity.

Chatting over that snag, the ladies realised their two ideas could work together. endota spa was born.

10 years, 65 spa locations and untold hours, meetings, ideas, highs and lows later, and endota spas can now be found in some of the country’s most iconic destinations, in almost every Australian state and territory.

The endota founders have always been strong advocates for using environmentally sound, Australian made products. So when they decided to launch a ‘spa in a jar’ skincare range in 2005, it was always going to be Australian and organic.

endota spa certified organic skincare is now sold in their spas and David Jones.

Today, the founders, both still in their thirties, remain the key drivers of the endota spa business, brand and vision and are still focused on the three things that have made endota such a massive success to date: service, service and service.



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