

THE GIBS review

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Please submit your answers by **12 October 2006.**

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Congratulations to **Chaplain Debeila**, the winner of the August Quiz.

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You need passion, determination and... kahunas to survive in advertising

By Adelle Wapnick, founding partner of Cross Colours

Advertising is an incredible field. Never dull or boring, it is interesting and dynamic, vital and ever changing.



They say a career in advertising is also one of the most stressful. When you consider the huge responsibilities resting on the shoulders of doctors, nurses, teachers, builders and rocket scientists, it seems odd that advertising ranks fourth on the stress Richter scale. I have been in advertising for more than 20 years and trust me; it's true.

I think it has a lot to do with meeting constant deadlines, but even more so: being persistently creative. We were not raised to develop and nurture creativity from within. So, most adults find the constant process of creating and developing, extremely exhausting.

“ I don't think you would survive advertising, unless you really loved it. It is how you approach it that makes the difference. ”

This was one of the major reasons I wanted to start something of my own. I wanted to have a business in which I could do it differently, and make a difference - where money wasn't everything, where

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awards weren't paramount, where interpersonal relationships were more important than anything else, and most of all, where I could flourish as a woman.

For me, this meant finding a balance between having a family and running a business, and doing them both properly.

Starting a business is a very humbling experience. You come from a large organisation, a fair sized fish in a big pond. Then you start a new business and you feel like a clownfish in the ocean.

My two business partners and I started advertising and design agency Cross Colours, which initially operated out of my apartment in Yeoville, Johannesburg. It was new, exciting and offered a certain charm.

Our clients, Mercedes Benz and Nando's, felt excited to be part of this new venture. We felt honoured to have them as clients.

Over the years our business, client base and staff complement grew. So too, did our learning.

There are a number of core lessons that arise from starting a business, which I'm sure I read about before I started mine.

But; learning is a strange thing. It's not something you read about in order to cope with the challenges business brings. It's something you have to experience. The decisions you make when things happen, determine the degree of learning or growth. It's a conscious choice.

Common sense: One thing I've learned in business is that common sense is possibly the most inappropriate term for what it means. It is not common at all. The way in which we view situations is determined by our own structure of interpretation. This means that it is very seldom that anyone will view something exactly the same way you do.

Dealing with this requires patience, and most self-starters don't have much of that character trait. That's why finding like-minded individuals with which to work is so pleasurable.

Partners: Choosing the right business partners is without a doubt the luckiest thing I did. I would hate to do it alone. While they are like-minded, they each have a very different skills-set. Their differing and complementary natures bring balance to our working environment.

It works wonders, and I would dare to say that it is the magic that people ascribe to our business and its culture.

Money: Never begin a business for the money. When you do what you love, well...money will come. I'm not suggesting that you don't take care of your finances, that you don't have a financial guru (ours is a genius), that you don't plan or project. What I am suggesting is, if money is the sole purpose of a business venture, it is bound to fail. Money is a by-product of greatness; it is not a sustainable driver of greatness.

People: The management of people is one of the areas you least expect to be the most difficult. There's the saying about children, "little kids, little problems, big kids bigger problems". It's much the same with staff: Lots of staff, lots of problems.

Confrontation is never easy, and I've learnt over the years not to procrastinate, but to deal with people issues on a daily basis. Having a culture of accountability is critical for success. Our most sensible appointment was our human resources manager.

Less emotion: When the business was new, my behaviour and decisions (especially as a woman) were often based on emotion. Afterall, this was my baby. As time passed and I felt and came to understand the need to let go, my decision-making processes became more rational and discerning. While it all forms part of the

business maturity process, it requires conscious choices.

Advice: As our business grew, we sought the assistance of professionals. From consultants to coaches, there's no doubt about the difference they've made. They are often the teachers and therapists we need to acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses. The right influences can go a long way in enhancing your business.

Caravans: A client and I share a small sentiment: 'the dogs are barking, but the caravan will move on'. When there's a lot going on and I am faced with difficult situations I think of the caravans and know that in the end, 'this too shall pass'.

Sense of humour: Above all else, always retain your sense of humour. Through good times and bad, there's nothing like a good laugh to put things into perspective.

I recall when we first decided start the agency, it felt as if there was a huge black hole or void in front of us. There were so many unanswered questions: How were we to afford equipment? How would we find clients? From where would we operate?

In retrospect, I realised the huge black hole was in fact a sliver or crack of black. A small jump across to the other side was all that was required. It was nothing.

I think starting any new business seems daunting. With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight you realise how easy it is if you have the passion, determination and (as our Costa Rican client would say) the kahunas.

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