

Small business Q&A

AUCKLAND BUSINESS

CHAMBER

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Father-and-daughter business partners Jamie and Allen Bertelsen talk to **Aimee Shaw** about working together and lifting an industry award usually won by the big guns

What does your business do?

Jamie: We are a manufacturing and distribution business called Hideaway Bins, which designs bins for kitchens, bathrooms and laundries. We've owned the business since 2006 when we took it over from the previous owner.

What was the motivation for buying a business as opposed to starting one?

Allen: It was a business that I'd had some exposure to as an accountant and we saw an opportunity for a small business that could grow if it was given more marketing attention, and that's where Jamie's expertise came in.

Jamie: I have a business degree in marketing and management so I've always wanted to run a business and dad knew that so effectively he opened up that opportunity for me. As we grew, dad moved out of his practice and joined the company fulltime so we could concentrate on pushing the business forward.

What's been the biggest challenge you've had to overcome running a business that is already established?

Jamie: The biggest challenge has actually been designing products for the homeowner – trying to create waste and recycling as well as clever storage solutions and changing the thinking of the kitchen and cabinet-making industry towards these products.

Allen: We have distributors who we sell to. Companies like Hasley are a national distributor for us in New



Jamie and Allen Bertelsen's company Hideaway Bins scooped the Red Dot Award for product design.

Zealand and the product is also distributed by Carters and ITM. The product is also sold in Australia.

What are your long-term plans for the business?

Jamie: Our goal is to take the bin international, as in further afield than just Australasia. We want to seek

expressions of interest for international distribution. So far, we have had interest from Europe.

You recently won an industry award that is usually won by large companies. Tell me about that and how will it affect business aspirations?

Jamie: We received the Red Dot Award for product design. We were announced as the winner for our Concelo kitchen bin design range. There were 5500 entries submitted from 50 countries around the world so to receive this award is massive for us. It is the most regarded international design competition in

Essen, Germany. The likes of Fisher & Paykel and Air New Zealand have received these awards in previous years so for a company the size of ours, it is pretty amazing. It normally goes to companies with huge R&D teams and very large budgets.

Allen: We hope that it would give our product the recognition that a lot of research and good quality design has gone into it. The New Zealand market is small and not a big player on the international stage so I think when you can win an award like this it shines a light. It also puts our company on the map as a design leader. I think a lot of the international distributors and manufacturers internationally will definitely start paying attention to us.

What advice would you give to people wanting to start their own business?

Jamie: Nothing happens overnight and you just have to keep chipping away slowly.

Allen: Surround yourself with good people, whether that's employees or outsiders. Don't be afraid to ask advice – there are a lot of people out there that are willing to give their advice freely. We spoke to designers and cabinet makers at the start of our journey who critiqued our earlier prototypes and gave us feedback.

Jamie: Asking people for their opinion, you get a true and brutal view of where you are actually at in the process and, from there, you can get a lot of learnings. Also, starting your business with your family is a really amazing journey – I would highly recommend it. You can always trust your family and I've learned so much from my dad.