

P rime Minister John Howard's vision for an enterprise nation contains a fatal flaw. Soon after he moved into the Lodge in 1996, there were predictions that women would be running half the nation's small businesses. Last year, Howard said many new small businesses were started by

women. He described female small-business owners as "the new face of innovative Australia".

Not so. The number of female entrepreneurs has actually been declining, a trend at odds with the United States and Canada, and, much to the astonishment of Australian researchers, policy makers and the business community. Among Australians under 30, the proportion of female entrepreneurs is even lower than in older generations. It is mostly Australian men who are starting their own businesses. Australian women are, if anything, being wooed back to big business.

The trend is accelerating. Since 1995, there has been a 3% fall in the number of female small-business owners in Australia, to 529,000. That figure includes small businesses run in partnerships, so the real number of female entrepreneurs in Australia is substantially lower. In fact, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from 2004 shows

The new gender divide

While men are rushing off to start their own businesses, women are missing in action. So where are they?

By Amanda Gome and Emily Ross

that only 16.6% of small businesses are run predominantly by women. That figure has dropped three percentage points in just 12 months.

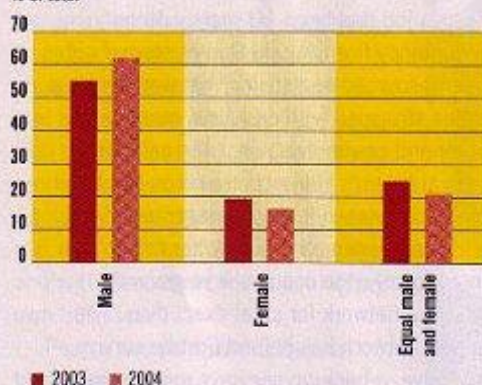
Although fewer women are running their own businesses, men now make up 62% of small-business operators, up from 55% in 2003. The most noticeable change was among the under-30s, where the proportion of men rose from 65% in June 2003 to 73% in June 2004.

Men are swelling the ranks of the self-employed, leading to radical changes in the labour landscape, as outlined in *ME INC* (Cover Story, July 28). Now about 20% of Australian workers are self-employed; that figure is expected to reach 50% within 15-20 years. If the trend continues, it will be the men who will be leaving corporations, to be replaced by technology, outsourcing and more women.

BRW research also reveals that during the past 10 years, the number of female entrepreneurs on the *BRW Rich 200* and the *BRW Fast 100* has not increased at all. Only 11 of the 96 members of the *BRW Young Rich* list in 2004 were women who had created their own entrepreneurial businesses.

A MAN'S GAME

Proportion of small businesses, by gender of operators
% of total



SOURCE: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Many women who start a micro business never take the next step, preferring to stay small and not employ staff. The founder of Evergreen Marketing Communications, Gill Walker, says: "Women are going to miss out on getting a slice of the money and never know the independence and fulfilment of running their own business. It is a thrill. Every morning I get up and do something different."

Radical change

If women are not running their own businesses, where are they? The past decade has brought a radical change in employment, most of it motivated by women. Of the 1.74 million new jobs created in Australia between 1995 and 2004, more positions (928,000) went to women than men (816,000), according to ABS data. Of these, one in three men set up a small business, many of them home-based. But only one in 14 women did the same.

Cathy Pearce, who runs Cathy Jayne Developments, a thriving South Australian property business, says there is a simple reason for this. "I think it is just hard; it is hard for women to be everything."

Associate Professor Barbara Pocock, of the University of Adelaide's

MARIA DEVESON CRABBE

Company: Aussie Bodies

2004-05 turnover: \$15 million

Tip: Build a strong support network

'I was so determined'



MARIA DEVESON CRABBE:
A roller-coaster ride

it work, I knew the business had enormous scope."

Aussie Bodies makes protein foods and supplements such as sports nutrition drinks and protein bars. It was the first company in Australia to market whey protein concentrate. Crabbe has taken the products from a small niche market to being distributed in supermarkets and convenience stores in Australia, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates. Aussie Bodies has 40 employees and turnover of \$15 million.

The company's new owner, New Zealand's largest health food company, Healtheries, has appointed Crabbe as the chief executive until at least March 2008. Crabbe now owns just 10% of the business; her equity has been whittled away as the business has always been in need of cash to survive. She has not been a primary owner since 1996.

Crabbe started Aussie Bodies with \$20,000 gathered from a pool of investors that included friends and family. Her only previous job had been 10 years with an accountancy firm. Aussie Bodies started out under-resourced and stayed that way for years. Crabbe struggled with cashflow, margins, debtor and credit days, what she calls her "critical levers". Her secret weapon has been her support network, her management, staff, various co-owners, the board, her father and, more recently, the coach she works with through a network for chief executives. The support network has helped Crabbe survive and thrive, a back-up she says more female entrepreneurs should have.

At 41, Crabbe can now look back on the turbulence of Aussie Bodies' lifetime, knowing that she can pretty much handle anything that comes along. The reward for all that hard work for Crabbe is seeing her "unwavering commitment and bloody-mindedness" pay off, having a great team to work with and coming to work every day and loving what she does.

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school of social sciences, says: "Part-time and casual work does seem to be a vehicle of choice for women because of their primary care responsibilities." Australia has twice the rate of part-time workers as the US (25%).

The gender split in 2004 for employees was almost equal: 52% men and 48% women, according to the AMP National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) *Income and Wealth Report* on small business. Anne Harding, director of NATSEM, says: "An employee chosen at random is almost as likely to be a woman as a man. But this is still not true for small-business operators, where an operator is twice as likely to be a man."

In the US, female-owned businesses are growing at twice the national rate of all businesses, according to the Centre for Women's Business Research in Washington, DC. There are about 10.6 million privately held entities, accounting for nearly half of all privately held enterprises in the country, in which women own half or more of the assets. The term "mompreneurs" has been coined by the US forecaster and author Daniel Pink to describe the growing band of mothers running their own businesses. In Canada, women make up 40% of business owners.

The rise of the service industry

The new gender divide has its origins in the 1970s when the industrial age, which favoured male jobs, began to make way for the service industry, characterised by white-collar part-time jobs.

Women who had tertiary degrees were forced to work in hostile, discriminatory workplaces through the 1980s and early 1990s. But during the past decade, conditions have been improving, particularly for highly skilled women, as the idea of attracting and retaining women and reducing sex discrimination began to make sense.

The federal sex discrimination commissioner, Pru Goward, says: "The biggest corporations are making it more tempting than they used to. With the exception of law firms, many do anything to keep good women." On August 8, employees had another breakthrough: the opportunity for employees on federal awards to take two years' unpaid leave and work part-time until their children go to school. The Business Council of Australia says 74% of its members now offer maternity leave.

Maria Deveson Crabbe's experience at the helm of Aussie Bodies since 1992 is a stark reminder of what entrepreneurs can go through to keep their businesses alive. She has worked ungodly hours — even sleeping on the floor at the office, has seen off administrators, living on just \$300 a week, scrounging for staff wages, relentless travel, three different sets of co-owners in the business and seemingly endless phone conversations with her bank, explaining how she could cover the cheques she was going to write that day. "There were days when I thought I was bloody-minded, other days when I felt like a total failure," she says. "But I was so determined to make

The growth in part-time work has also favoured women who juggle work and home commitments. As a director of the federal Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), Anna McPhee understands it, 76% of women employed part-time are happy with the hours they work. Only 24% want to work longer.

Goward says the growing number of

female employees are being drawn from the ranks of potential female entrepreneurs. "There is no doubt that the tremendous effort [of women's groups], as well as economic factors such as a growing skills shortage, is contributing to the growing number of female employees at the expense of female entrepreneurs."

As women gained better conditions in the

workforce through the past decade (albeit from a low base), the opposite was happening to men. In a way, the patriarchal culture rebounded on them. The same flexibility has not been offered to skilled white-collar men.

Although workplaces are becoming more focused on results than on hours worked, men still feel obliged to be seen late at their desks. The International Labour Organisation

CATHY PEARCE

Company: Cathy Jayne Developments

2004-05 turnover: \$100 million plus

Tip: Work on your skill gaps and understand every aspect of the business

Zeal for a deal

Cathy Pearce, 32, is usually in the office of Cathy Jayne Developments, her Adelaide property development and investment business, by 7am on workdays. On weekends she can be found at open-for-inspections and catching up on paperwork at home. It is a seven-day "intense" commitment, says the mother of three (the youngest is 18 months). Her working hours easily total 60 hours a week and can stretch to 80.

Her entrepreneurial zeal goes back to her childhood. Pearce remembers that she was "always trying to get a dollar", selling junk at trash-and-treasure markets or selling home-made lemonade. Her mother was a social worker, her father was the national manager for Mitsubishi Motors Australia. "They always said I could do whatever I wanted to do and I have always had that strong belief."

The business started eight years ago when Pearce was pregnant with her first child. After renovating and selling her own property, Pearce used the \$6000 profit to invest in some tired maisonettes in Glenelg North. The original idea for the business was that it would be a hobby on the side. "But it mushroomed," she says. She worked from a little study at home, and after the baby was born she became used to doing deals on her mobile phone, pushing a pram around the streets, hoping her baby wouldn't start crying. She took several courses, learning about woodwork, interior design and small business, filling any gaps in her skills.

She then began a joint venture with another property developer on a 10-unit project, and the

business started to gather momentum. Pearce worked project by project until the third year of the business, when she started to make more substantial plans.

She has a nanny-housekeeper, and her husband, a successful property developer in his own right, plays a strong role as a parent. He is also second-in-command in Cathy Jayne Developments, which now has sales of more than \$100 million and a staff of 12.

Pearce bought her first investment property at 19 with savings from her job as a dental nurse. She switched to property management, quickly showing a flair for a deal. "I realised I had a passion for property," she says. She briefly worked in the Queensland property market before returning to Adelaide. "I came back on a Sunday, met my future husband on a Monday and within months I was planning my own business."

Pearce has paid close attention to the financial side of the business, as well as the aesthetics of her developments. "In property, the deal only works at the right price, and banks always want to know that their money is safe, so you have to work on substantial ways to show what your properties will end up selling for," she says.

The business has been profitable from the start. Rather than taking

a salary, Pearce tends to reward herself when a project is completed. Although she always makes it to school sports days, she is aware that there are times when her children have missed out. "But I think, overall, I am able to balance it really well."

Pearce has applied for a licence to allow public investment in new Cathy Jayne Development projects. "I like a challenge and I want to take this to the maximum point that I can." She plans to have projects in Queensland and take on larger developments in Adelaide. "I definitely have no regrets. When you are doing what you love doing, it doesn't feel like work. You definitely find more time in your day."

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CATHY PEARCE:
Worth all the sacrifices



recently found that Australia has the fourth-highest proportion of people working 50 hours a week and that Australians' working hours are rising faster than those in any other country. Rohan Squirchuk, the managing director of the employer association Diversity Council of Australia, says: "Many workplaces are not tolerant of men working part-time, which is sexism. It may well be a reason why they are starting their own businesses, as some, particularly divorced dads, want more flexibility so they see their kids."

Over the past decade, large companies have been outsourcing some functions and retrenching layers of management, replacing many employees with technology and consultants. Many of the first jobs to be outsourced were in male-dominated areas: first IT, followed by insurance, finance, accounting, project management and the law. Men,

quick to seize opportunities — or forced by the lack of another job — began starting home businesses. Only now are conventionally "female" jobs beginning to be outsourced. Sonia Stephens, 38, who is now running her own business, PR Counsel, believes more women will soon be following men out of the office. "The outsourcing boom is only now taking off in areas like marketing, public relations and media buying, where there are lots of women," she says. "This will have a roll-on effect. My friends saw me doing it and thought they could do it too."

Work versus home

Squirchuk believes women may follow men into small business. "The husband is a plasterer and after she helps set his business up, she thinks, 'I can do that.'" Or will they? There is another, more sinister, reason why

Australian women are choosing to go into offices every day instead of striking out on their own: they are still part of a sexist culture that expects women to do most of the housework and child care.

Women do about 70% of all the work in Australian households, even taking into account men's usual roles such as lawn mowing and paperwork. Goward says: "The husband might take [the children] to sport on the Saturday, but he still asks her where they are playing and when."

Women who are doing most of the housework cannot put in the long hours required to run their own business. "Who wants to run Home Inc and Work Inc? You only have so much energy," Goward says.

ABS data shows that the average full-time small-business owner puts in longer hours than the average full-time employee. In

GEMMA KELLY EMMA BROWN

Company: Staff it

2004-05 turnover: \$3 million

Tip: For would-be entrepreneurs: stop thinking "If only I had so much money I could start my business", and just get out there and do it

Dual approach

In 1996, when Gemma Kelly was just 22, she started the recruitment business Staff it. Kelly wanted to create a business that would set her up for life. "I wanted to have the choice of not having to work," she says. Kelly's business idea was a customer-centric recruitment agency where as much attention is paid to the candidate as to the client. "There was no capital to start," Kelly says. "At the end of the day you need a phone, and everything else can come from that." Co-owner Emma Brown joined the business straight from university in 1999, prepared for the "crazy" seven-day working weeks.

When the women started the business they were still living in a flat and had a "basic" standard of living. So working long, tough hours and reinvesting their earnings back into the business was not an enormous sacrifice. "Other than not having a lifestyle, we didn't have to make any changes," Brown says.

The first home for Staff it was a warehouse in Pyrmont in Sydney's inner west. Kelly worked out a deal to manage the storage business and in return received concessions on rent and other utilities. For the first 12 months, a New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) allowance helped cover costs.

The business now has 13 staff and places more than 100 people in temporary and permanent jobs every week, in sectors including financial services, hospitality and customer service. It also provides a range of human-resource services such as skills testing, exit interviews and outplacement services.

Staff it developed quickly, and big contracts with companies including SAI put the firm on the recruitment map. These large contracts paid for further expansion. Within three years turnover had reached \$1.2 million. In the past 12 months turnover has been more than \$3 million.

Although many entrepreneurs cannot pay themselves for the first few years, Kelly and Brown have always had enough profit to pay themselves. They now each own residential properties as well as their interests in the business and its investment portfolio.

One of the main reasons why Kelly wanted Staff it to become more than a micro-business was that she knew it would be too hands-on if it stayed small. "That would defeat the purpose of me not wanting to have a job," she says.

Kelly wanted Staff it to grow. She knew a micro business would be too hands-on.

Kelly is the financial and operational manager, Brown concentrates on sales and marketing. "We are very different entrepreneurs," Kelly says. Brown is the extrovert workaholic, who describes not working "as a nightmare". Kelly is the introvert, passionate about investing. At 32, she is more interested in developing Staff it and her investment portfolio.

2004, female full-time small-business operators were about six times more likely than female full-time employees to be working 55 hours or more a week.

Barbara Pocock says: "If a business grows, you can't grow your time. That is the reason why women are not lining up to be entrepreneurs. The culture of motherhood is strong in Australia. 'Proper' mothers in Australia don't run large, successful businesses."

The Howard Government has reinforced this with rhetoric and policy. If women are not employed, they stay at home. The EOWA's McPhee says first-time Australian mothers are less inclined to return to work

than women in other Western countries. In Australia, 49% of women go back to work after their first child. In the US the figure is 80%; in Scandinavia it is closer to 90%.

Staying home is a luxury few families in other countries can afford. Joanne Sackville, who runs the children's wear company Minihaha & Hiawatha, says few of her friends returned to work after having children. "If they did, it was with the family business where they could take time off if the children were sick."

The well-travelled Sackville says living in the US and Britain is not cheap. "Without two salaries you would struggle. Here, the

cost of living is less and the lifestyle is better. People don't have to strive as hard."

Associate Professor Anne Ross-Smith of the school of management at University of Technology, Sydney, says: "This is new — that Australian women are less inclined to return to the workforce."

Swapping profit for a job

Amanda Briskin, an entrepreneur who runs the Mimco accessories brand, says the gloss has come off the image of running a business. "The fact is, it is really hard and people are more aware of it. I do think there is more reality about the demands of business. You don't start a business if you want more control of your life." What makes it particularly hard in Australia is the burden of red tape and paperwork.

NATSEM's Harding surmises that one reason many businesses do not grow beyond a single operator working at home is the increased regulation and associated employee costs.

Goward says the three-volume Tax Act and strict regulations at state and federal levels are certainly a deterrent to potential entrepreneurs. Harding says: "The US depends on litigation to solve its problems, while we rely on regulation to prevent problems which creates others."

Catherine Mundy is typical of many women who, in other countries, might be running their own company. Hard-working, determined, with entrepreneurial flair and leadership skills, she nevertheless is perfectly happy as an "employee" working as a project manager on capital projects for the Victorian Government. "I couldn't go out as a private consultant. I have friends who work as private consultants and run small businesses, and they are consumed by the paperwork and red tape and they spend vast amounts of time dealing with the Australian Taxation Office."

Mundy is happy to forgo any profit she would make running her own business, and instead have her employer take care of her. "I am paid a commensurate amount for my work and I have my life organised for me. Besides, I didn't wait until my late 30s to have a child, only to hand him over to a nanny. You only get one go at parenting," she says.

As more relationships break down, many women are turning to the security of a weekly



GEMMA KELLY and
EMMA BROWN:
Just do it

Some of the profits of Staff it have been ploughed into a diversified investment pool that Kelly manages. "It is fascinating that people run a business for 40 years and at the end they have nothing but the business," Kelly says. The fund returned 22% last financial year.

Although Kelly and Brown have scaled back on the seven-day working weeks, the workload is increasing again as the pair look at new

business and investment opportunities. They are also starting to receive buyout offers. For Kelly, a sale is the last thing on her mind: "We have short-term plans to have a national presence. It is a good cash cow."

Although both have given thought to having children, motherhood is not in either women's short-term plans. Brown says: "It is not a reality at all."

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pay cheque, paid holidays, sick leave and family leave that corporations offer. Those women who are raising children on their own are attracted by the certainty of paid work. Squirchuk says: "Women, because they are responsible for caring, are more conservative because they are worrying about where the next meal is coming from."

And as more men decide to work for themselves, their partners are often forced to stay in a "secure" job to lessen the risk as the business becomes established.

False security

The trade-off is that women could be exposing their careers to more risk. The trend to downsizing, proposed industrial relations changes and a growing trend towards Australian Workplace Agreements are likely to make job "security" an illusion.

As men are riding the ups and downs of self-employment, enjoying the power, independence and fun of their own venture, women are missing out on building crucial skills as the "self" revolution gathers pace.

Women are also missing out on opportunities to accumulate wealth. Yet when prepared to take the plunge, they prove good at it, as the four case studies accompanying this report demonstrate. In almost every age

group, female small-business operators had more personal wealth than any other group — male small-business operators, and male and female employees alike, the NATSEM report shows.

Deirdre Gruiters, owner of the consultant broker aCE talentNET, says that once women have taken the leap into their own business, the fear of failure eases. "They are more willing to be a little more flexible in their approach and strategy," she says.

Co-owner Denise Hall says people risk becoming "institutionalised" if they stay an employee for decades. Organisations do not train you to stand on your own two feet and know you are good at it, she says. "That's the stuff they want you to leave at the door."

Despite the barriers, few entrepreneurs — men or women — would trade their lives for that of an employee. They say a pragmatic approach can overcome many of the sticking points. Some female entrepreneurs remain burdened with the majority of the housework, but outsourcing chores and house maintenance enables them to focus on the business. Others invite their partners to join their business in management or financial roles, then leave them at the office to turn out the lights.

NATSEM's Harding says it is possible

when running your own business to work the hours that suit. "More small-business mothers work less than 20 hours a week, compared to employee mothers. Being a part-time small-business owner can provide a more-flexible alternative for some mothers than being a part-time employee."

Sonia Stephens points out that many women in middle-management jobs in the services industry are actually working far harder than if they were running their own businesses. Stephens was managing eight clients at a time for a large public relations agency, working from 8am to 8pm, with no lunch, and usually with a headache or a migraine. "I was a slave and it affected my health," she says. "I was worked to the bone, and you can't give clients the personal service they need, which is also stressful."

Disappearing social lives

Most of her female friends in their early 30s were in a similar position. "We did not have a social life or see family, and half of them did not have relationships because they did not have time to go out or find a guy," she says.

The catalyst for Stephens to start her own business was a physical collapse and an ultimatum from her boyfriend. "He said, 'It's

JOANNESACKVILLE

Company: Minihaha & Hiawatha

2004-05 turnover: \$4 million

Tip: Value great staff and always work on improving time management

A life of kids and clothes

Joanne Sackville has a simple theory on why Australia has so few female entrepreneurs.

"The lifestyle in Australia is pretty easy and the cost of living is lower than in, say, the UK and US," she says. "People here don't have to strive too hard to have a good life. The family module is also important and if people have the choice, they want to stay home when the children are little."

Running an entrepreneurial business is sheer hard work. British-born Sackville, 38, should know. For 11 years she has worked long, exhausting hours to establish her children's clothing chain, Minihaha & Hiawatha, in the

first five years often working from nine to midnight. Her marriage collapsed last year and she says she has sacrificed time with her children.

"My priority was the children, then the business, and there was not much space for anything else," Sackville says. But she would not have it any other way. "I am pretty proud and wanted to prove I could do something on my own. I also wanted to support my family in the way I grew up and send them to private schools."

She arrived in Australia at 26, wanting to be a fashion buyer like her mother, who worked

for Harvey Nichols in Britain. But she was not prepared to take a sales assistant's role first. She started importing clothes from Indonesia. "Co-ordinating people and controlling quality was a real headache." Then she began to design and manufacture women's and children's clothing, supplying boutiques and David Jones. She soon dropped the women's wear and focused on building brands for children (Hiawatha) and babies (Minihaha). "Children's shops were easier to deal with and there was less competition."

Sackville quickly became known for "signature" children's clothes that were expensive and highly fashionable. "We used in-house designs, prints and embroideries. We have had the same designer for nine years, so the handwriting on the garments stays the same."

Disaster struck in 1997: her husband's laundry business burnt down, when she was pregnant with her first child. "My business was in the shop above, but fortunately we only

me or the job and here are the things you are going to miss if you chose the job; but choose me, take the leap and I will support you'."

She chose the man. "A lot of men are giving their girlfriends ultimatums and walking out. We are all finding out that the six figures and the titles are not worth it."

Stephens now enjoys enormous flexibility, having coffee with her mother, going to the gym or for a swim and collecting her child from school. She also values her financial independence. "I can go out and buy a car and an investment property if I want."

Motherhood can act as the trigger to step off the corporate treadmill. Grueters says many women first escape corporate life through motherhood. They get a taste of what life is like, and they enjoy it. "From there they make a decision about what they can do to maximise their skills."

Their own worst enemy

Many barriers are misconstrued perceptions, female entrepreneurs warn. Gemma Kelly, who founded the recruitment agency Staff it at the age of 22, says: "People say to me all the time, 'Oh I would love to start my own business if I had a hundred grand'. They think they need all this money. I think

suffered smoke damage. But my husband lost everything. He was covered by insurance but instead of setting up again, he came and worked in the business."

A new century began with revenue of \$1 million, a baby and a toddler — and a renewed focus on building the business after pulling back during pregnancies and births. In 2001 Sackville rebranded her range of boys' clothes with the help of graphic designers and launched Wolf, aimed at babies to 14-year-old boys. Two years later she launched Be Be, a baby wear label that is also designed for premature babies linked to monitors. "It is pure cotton and nothing needs to go over the baby's head. You won't find teddies or ducks: it is very modern for the young, contemporary mother." Along the way she jettisoned an unsuccessful brand, Paperdoll, which was aimed at girls aged between eight and 14.

Sackville now stocks 170 boutiques and David Jones, and revenue has leapt to \$4 million. She is exporting to New Zealand,

people put these barriers up for themselves. At the end of the day, you need a phone."

Similarly, when Briskin started Mimco she says she was not terrified if the business didn't work. That fear of failure can be a great barrier that stops women from starting from scratch.

Another barrier is being too much of a perfectionist. Goward warns that many high-achieving business women are perfectionists in the home and in the office. One entrepreneur, Gill Walker, who in 2002 walked away from being managing director of a large advertising agency to start Evergreen Marketing Communications, says women have to accept that if someone else does the job it will not be 100% — that 90% is good enough. "Otherwise we spend our time doing someone else's job and not getting paid for it."

She also says women are indoctrinated with the idea that if they can do a task, they

should. "It gets you nowhere. I put off getting a cleaner for five years because I could do it myself, and I lived in a pig sty," she says.

Walker says women can be "stupid" about spending on advisers, bookkeepers or marketing. "You can't save your way to success. If you are building a brand, you have to invest."

There is a huge thrill and enjoyment in "doing it on your own", she says. "I used to work 80 hours a week and was not earning a phenomenal salary. Now I earn the same and can take the dog for a run at 10 in the morning." In three years, she has built Evergreen, which specialises in advertising to older age groups, to a turnover of \$1 million.

Kelly has just one piece of advice for women. "Don't listen to people who try to talk you out of it," she says. "Being entrepreneurial means innovating, taking risks, being opportunistic and wanting to create your own destiny." ●



Britain, Japan and Ireland and is branching into the United States and the Middle East. "We want to take the next step, and our bright colours appeal to export markets," she says. She is negotiating with Debenhams, the huge company that owns many "high street" retailers in Britain. "It wants us to do product development work. I like to think that in the next five years we will have revenue of \$20 million."

Sackville says she has two tips for other female entrepreneurs: value great staff and develop time management. "I travel a lot and rely on the staff who have been there for nine years to run it while I am away." Of time management, she says: "We have 450 designs in our range to produce from drawing designs to finished products. It is very intense, so I always set deadlines and I always keep them."