

**\$START
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UP!**



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UP!**

Over 100 great ideas for
starting a successful business

Sonia Williams

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Introduction

For some people, new and innovative ideas simply flow from their creative being. For others, coming up with a business concept is like trying to find the proverbial needle in a haystack. It can be incredibly frustrating. Deep down you yearn to own and operate your own business and you know you would make a great businessperson. The only barrier to your entry into the business world is coming up with the seed — the idea. However, just because you haven't had your own light-bulb moment that doesn't mean you shouldn't be in business. You may very well have all the necessary skills, experience, commitment and passion to successfully run your own company, and denying yourself that opportunity simply because you can't find the right starting point could end up being a lifelong regret. *Start Me Up!* is written especially for people who are searching for that starting point. I want you to exploit the ideas in this book; after all, sometimes all we need is a helping hand to get on the first rung of the ladder of success.

But before I introduce you to the contents of my book I would like to quickly introduce myself. I have worked as a qualified Certified Practising Accountant (CPA) in several large corporate enterprises as well as government-based organisations and small boutique accounting practices. Nominated for the prestigious Telstra Business Women's Awards in 2008 and 2009, I have also published three books, two of which are bestsellers in their category: *Show Mummy the Money* and *Give it a Go: what have you got to lose?* What makes me an expert in this field is the fact that I have been there and done it, both online and offline, and I have lived to tell the tale. I have personally established several businesses, from wedding photography to publishing to bookkeeping. I have continued to set up diverse businesses over the last ten years, and successfully grow these businesses, simply because I know how to seize a great business idea and act upon it. I have also made some of the fundamental mistakes that trip up many entrepreneurs along the road to riches, and I have

discussed some of these in the course of this book, in the hope of preventing you from following in my footsteps!

Over time I have had many people ask me how I came up with the ideas for my various businesses. It isn't rocket science, but it does take an open mind and I soon realised that it was not something everyone could do. So I felt compelled to write this book, since there are so many people from all walks of life who could make very good businesspeople if they only had the inspirational seed to kick-start their journey. This is the purpose of *Start Me Up!*: to provide budding entrepreneurs with the platform to maximise their entrepreneurial skills and make the most of opportunities before them.

The key to sourcing new and exciting business ideas is to open your mind and live life considering every experience to be an opportunity. If you have a negative experience with a product or service, don't get upset. Instead, consider whether this is fate calling. Could you turn the situation around and develop a business opportunity from your experience? There have been many entrepreneurs over the years who have successfully turned a bad experience into a multi-million-dollar business opportunity.

The best part about living in a modern and ever-changing world is that nothing's perfect. There are limitless opportunities for entrepreneurs to get out there and improve the world we live in.

I often hear self-limiting statements such as 'I couldn't possibly start a business; I am not an entrepreneur'. One of the best things about being an entrepreneur is that there are no boundaries; there is no job description for 'entrepreneur'. You don't have to conform to certain criteria to become one. There are no age restrictions and it certainly doesn't matter what colour, creed, race or religion you are. Anyone and everyone has the opportunity to become a successful entrepreneur as it's more about visualisation and actualisation than anything else. When you can visualise what you want to achieve, you can start to see how you can make it happen.

This book is about providing you with the motivation and inspiration to see how you can make something happen. It doesn't matter if you have just left university, are looking for a career change, are a stay-at-home

mum or have partially retired from the workforce. The information in this book is designed to help you switch on the light-bulb moment that lies dormant within you.

Over the course of this book I will explain:

- how you can discover the business opportunities that already exist within you
- how you can capitalise on the latest trends
- and, most importantly, what you need to consider before you bankroll any new idea.

And if that doesn't help you come up with an idea, I have done the hard work for you by detailing more than 100 fantastic business concepts!

Irrespective of the business opportunity you decide to capitalise on, the key to success is to pursue opportunities you are passionate about. But I don't mean passionate in terms of how much money you could potentially earn from the opportunity. Truly successful businesses are those founded by people who are passionate about what they do — 'the cause'. Consider the example of the The Body Shop, an international success story founded by mother of three, Anita Roddick. Anita not only had the savvy to tap into the body beautiful market, she succeeded because she was unequivocally passionate and committed to social and environmental change. Success does not normally flow from ventures where the main objective is purely to make money. Seek out a market you desperately want to work in. Find a product or service that really interests you. To be successful in business you need to live and breathe the merits of your product or service.

Second, you also need to do your research. You can have the best idea at your fingertips, but without proper market research, a business plan and a crystal clear understanding of who represents your target market, you could very well turn a good idea into a great disaster. Information is power. With research you can better mould your idea and work out how to effectively launch it to generate maximise exposure. More importantly, proper research will help you to ensure your idea will be a moneyspinner.

I cannot stress this point enough; sadly too many excited entrepreneurs set up businesses in a fit of exhilaration and fail to do their homework. Don't become one of the statistics; take the time and effort to conduct research. It won't necessarily prevent you from making mistakes altogether but it will certainly limit their severity. In Chapter Four I set out exactly what research you need to do.

Finally, here's one more bit of advice from a seasoned entrepreneur: along your journey to becoming an entrepreneur you will experience many highs and lows. When enjoying the highs, take the time to smell the roses, and when you dive down into what can seem like the depths of despair, remember there is only one way from here and that's up. To claim that the journey of a small-business owner is easy is a mistake of massive proportions. It's not. However, the freedom to work when you want and how you want, to be in charge of your own financial future, is exhilarating to say the least. To balance the scales you have to expect to hit a few brick walls before you are able to finally smash through and experience success. The road does indeed get easier as you take more and more steps along it — this is the benefit of experience. But you will only gain that experience if you actually opt to take the path well worn by many successful entrepreneurs before you.

Good luck on the roller-coaster ride to becoming an entrepreneur!

Chapter One

The idea is right under YOUR NOSE

The search for the optimal business opportunity can be distracting. We get caught up in an endless search and forget to look at ourselves and assess our key strengths. What is your field of expertise? Do you have key strengths or some professional experience you could capitalise on? In this chapter I will help you to think about exactly what sort of business you could be running by detailing how to:

- 1. assess the 'YOU' business opportunity**
- 2. draw on life experiences**
- 3. put the cart before the horse**
- 4. identify a niche market.**



1. Assess the 'you' business opportunity

Ask yourself what you are good at. What are your core skills and strengths? Do you have any particular skills or professional expertise that could be utilised for the development of a business? Write them down.



Don't just answer 'no'. Everyone is good at something. The trick lies in recognising how you could turn this into a profitable business opportunity. For example, are you good at dispensing advice? Do friends and family continually seek your opinion? Perhaps you could capitalise on this skill by becoming a counsellor and charging for your advice. Do you regularly receive a mountain of compliments on your competence in the kitchen? Why not consider starting a catering business or running cooking classes to impart your superior cooking prowess? Maybe you could write a cookbook with your own secret recipes.

If you have a hobby you could capitalise on it. Alternatively, if you have a keen interest in a particular subject you could consider taking your interest one step further by turning your interest into your business. For some budding entrepreneurs their love of the environment has been the catalyst for their start-up ventures.

Leveraging off your skill set, interests and hobbies is a great way to start a business. If you start a business in an unfamiliar field you will undoubtedly face a steep learning curve. However, if you already have an intimate knowledge of and interest in your chosen field you will find it much easier. If you have memberships in various organisations, associations or clubs related to your hobby or area of expertise, you will find you already possess vital contacts that you can tap into to help establish the business.

Whether your family is your hobby or whether your interests lie elsewhere, it is important to recognise those interests that could make a

new venture work, and work well. When I started my photography business I had a genuine love of weddings, a passion for photography and a talent for working with Photoshop®. In fact, I was addicted to weddings and took great pleasure in capturing this special day for other couples. But because I did not have professional experience in the field of photography I did find it harder to establish the business. Ideally, when assessing yourself, consider what you do best and work to your strengths.

Take Jane McAllister of New Zealand, for example. What started out as a hobby is now Dimples, an internationally recognised brand of baby clothing and one of New Zealand's best-loved babywear labels with classic, timeless designs. Jane, a mum of fourteen, says she made clothes for her own children because money was scarce and she found she couldn't buy simple, practical, quality gear. From its inception in 1992, Dimples has grown rapidly. In 2006 Jane opened her first store in Newmarket, Auckland, as well as receiving orders from Harrods, the first New Zealand baby and toddler clothing range to be accepted into the exclusive London department store. Jane's designs have also been seen on many celebrity bubs.

Currently Dimples is stocked in high-end department stores throughout New Zealand as well as in specialty gift and children's wear shops. Jane also supplies outlets in Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Denmark, France and Switzerland. Korea and the United States look to be the next markets. Now that's not bad for someone who started off with a hobby! www.dimples.co.nz

Turning a hobby into a flourishing business is not just for those with a flair for craft. Scott Garnett and Richard Adamson are the founders of Australia's largest independent craft brewing company, Barons Brewing Company. For Garnett and Adamson, their beer empire started out as a hobby, with the pair converting their lounge room into a home brewery. They began by 'experimenting' with a range of different native ingredients, and then they shared their brew, hosting backyard beer parties for some of their closest friends. In 1997 they hosted their first home-based beer festival. This was to be the catalyst for their future success. By 2003, the number of people attending their sample beer festivals had significantly grown and it was evident that the boys had a market for their beer.

Within three years Garnett and Adamson managed to turn the hobby business into a raging success. They have had a significant impact on the intensely competitive Australian and international beer markets, winning multi-million-dollar export deals with distributors in the United States and Russia and a number of awards to boot. www.baronsbrewing.com

2. Draw on life experiences

Sometimes coming up with a successful business concept may be a matter of reviewing your own life experiences. Have there been any situations where you thought: ‘If only the product or service did ...’, ‘If only the product or service was ...’, ‘I wish there was a ...’? These sorts of situations are seeds. This is exactly how some successful entrepreneurs have come up with fantastic, innovative, award-winning ideas. Their products or services were born out of necessity. If you spend a little time thinking about your own personal experiences and how ‘it would have been great if there had been ...’, you will soon find a variety of business concepts comes to mind.

This is exactly how New Zealand engineer Dr Keith Alexander came up with the Springfree™ Trampoline, the ‘world’s safest trampoline’. Dr Alexander was motivated to come up with a safer trampoline for his own children to use after his wife refused to allow them to use the dangerous old-style one. After fourteen years and millions of dollars in research and testing, he delivered the perfect product, revolutionising the way consumers perceive traditional trampolines.

According to Springfree™, over 6000 Australian children are admitted to hospital each year after suffering injury on the springs and frame of old-style trampolines, or by falling off. Dr Alexander sought to design and create a recreational trampoline that was significantly safer and more fun to use. He succeeded. I know — I own one myself. It is the very first trampoline without coiled steel springs and is designed to remove all the traditional impact areas that cause equipment-induced trampoline injuries. The trampoline hit the market in 2003 and is now sold in fifteen countries with new sales regions coming on stream each year. Further

testament to its success is its inclusion as a finalist in the prestigious Australian International Design Awards, which recognise superior design and innovation. www.springfreetrampoline.com.au

Founders Will Scott and Graham Adams are the original inspiration behind the fresh food home-delivery service Aussie Farmers Direct. Their intention was twofold: to reinvent old-fashioned service and to help reconnect Australian farmers with urban consumers. Adams says he ‘remembers the days when the milkman delivered the milk’; however, having worked in the milk industry himself, where he witnessed the takeover by a multi-national, he started thinking about how the humble milkman could be the basis for a new business. The concept has proven a winner, with many consumers happy to bypass the larger and often foreign-owned distribution chains to buy direct from the food producers — dairy farmers, fruit growers, egg producers, locally owned bakeries. Aussie Farmers Direct filled a gap in the market by delivering produce direct to households via franchisees, appealing to an average 1250 new customers each week. In less than three years, sales have risen to tens of millions of dollars generated through their 72 franchisees — mostly in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. www.aussiefarmers.com.au

Sue Ismiel emigrated to Australia in her teenage years. By her early thirties, Sue had married and was the mother of three daughters. As a result of the need to find a depilatory cream for sensitive skin for one of her children, Sue created a natural, revolutionary hair-removal gel in her own kitchen. Experimenting with items from her pantry, Sue invented a ‘green goo-like substance’, which she named Nad’s. Nad’s was unique; it contained no chemicals and did not require heat for its application, unlike traditional waxes. With no scientific background and no business skills or experience, Sue invested \$5000 of her long-service leave and started selling Nad’s at local markets, and then on television via infomercials. Both the domestic and international retail market has sought out Nad’s. In less than a decade, Sue Ismiel has created a multi-million-dollar business, with Nad’s Natural Hair Removal Gel becoming one of the leading brands both domestically and in the lucrative United States market.

Her business success has been recognised by numerous awards including Ethnic Businesswoman of the Year (1999); induction into the Businesswomen's Hall of Fame (2000); the 2002 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year (Retail, Consumer and Industrial Products); *Sydney Business Bulletin's* Business Star of the Year; and *Sydney Business Review* Businesswoman of the Year. www.nads.com.au

While vacuuming his home, James Dyson realised his bag vacuum cleaner was constantly losing suction power. Dust would quickly clog the pores of the bag and block the airflow, which resulted in a rapid drop in suction. So James, an industrial designer by training, decided to solve the problem and invent a bagless vacuum cleaner. It took more than five years and 5127 prototypes to perfect his design, but in the early eighties James introduced to the world the first cyclonic bagless vacuum cleaner.

James Dyson offered his invention to major manufacturers. One by one they turned him down, apparently not interested in new technology. They seemed determined to continue selling bags, a lucrative market. Today James's persistence and patience has paid off. By 2005 his vacuum cleaners had become popular in both Europe and the United States, with the rest of the world soon following suit. In 2008 it was reported his company's revenues had reached a staggering \$1 billion. In James' own words: 'You know the feeling when some everyday product lets you down. "I could have designed this better myself," you think. But how many of us turn our thoughts into actions?' www.dyson.com

3. Put the cart before the horse

Consumers are grouped into various target markets categorised by their unmet needs, and these target markets are made up of many different social groups, such as pensioners, new home buyers, parents, singles, teens, children, babies, same-sex couples, the fashion conscious, gardeners or DIY home renovators. (These groups are just the tip of a *Titanic*-sized iceberg.) An alternative method for identifying a great business idea is to start by deciding on which target market you could serve and what its unmet needs are. Essentially you are working

backwards. By identifying the needs of the consumer first, you can then undertake your own brainstorming session to uncover ways to successfully satisfy those needs.

Let's consider an example. With advances in medical technology and healthier lifestyles, we can now look forward to a longer life expectancy. So who is catering for the needs of the ageing population, the baby boomers? This target market provides a golden opportunity for the budding entrepreneur. Start by considering what the unmet needs are. For one segment of the ageing baby boomer market, retirement represents travel — both international and domestic. In the past five years there has been a sharp increase in the number of caravans purchased. With this in mind, what products or services would help these consumers achieve their travel ambitions, given their age and physical condition? Could you offer a specialised travel service — Contiki tours for seniors? What products would make travelling easier?

For other boomers retirement is about living life as comfortably as possible. Business opportunities exist in designing the necessary equipment, utensils and accessories to help the elderly achieve this ideal. For example, better designed cookware for people with arthritic hands or recipe books adapted for those with poor eyesight. Services required by this segment of consumers could include running errands, shopping, or helping with cooking and other domestic chores.

You can see from this example how by identifying the target market first you can then start to consider what unmet needs exist, and how you could successfully satisfy those needs. Remember, a great idea need not be ground breaking or earth shattering, it simply has to satisfy a particular group's unsatisfied needs.

4. Identify a niche market

Gordon Gekko introduced the saying 'Greed is good'. But in business, greed is not good. Many budding entrepreneurs fail to see the benefits of servicing a niche market. Rather, they prefer to target a broader market in order to maximise sales. The fact is that it is far more

profitable and cost-effective to target one segment, a niche market, within a much bigger market. If you try to cater to the needs of a total market you may well miss out on an opportunity to successfully satisfy the needs of a smaller subgroup. Using the example above, ageing boomers interested in travel form a target market with specific needs. However, the niche within this market might be those who seek to travel overseas or those who prefer to travel the local countryside in a caravan. Breaking the overall market down into attractive niche markets is often the key to a successful business.


This is exactly what Diana Williams, founder of Fernwood Women's Health Clubs, has done. Twenty years ago, Diana identified and pursued a niche market within the total health and fitness industry. The idea was to provide a health and fitness centre for women that catered not only to their health needs but also to their community needs. Williams has said that her club is a women's club, not just a fitness centre. Not only did Williams find a niche ready to be served, she opened at the right time. The fitness boom was just beginning, health awareness had been given a big push by media outlets and baby boomers were also realising that growing old gracefully wasn't going to happen during an extended lunch with a bottle of Chardonnay. People were ready to act. Women wanted a place of their own and Williams was there to serve their interests. Fernwood Women's Health Clubs now operates over 75 gyms and has a turnover in excess of \$100 million.

This is especially remarkable when you consider that it wasn't until her children left home that Williams undertook a business degree. She had no previous business experience and set no business plan, admitting that she probably did it all wrong in conservative business terms. What she did right was recognise a niche market and create a product that suited the needs of this market perfectly. Take a moment to think about what might happen if you find the right target market before the kids leave home. The possibilities are endless. And like Williams you might even be able to begin a multi-million-dollar trend. Williams has had her imitators, but Fernwood Women's Health Clubs are still the strongest of the women-only gyms. Why? The reason is simple. Finding the right

niche target market and the product to service that market before anyone else means that it becomes very difficult for your competitors to surpass you, particularly if you continue to innovate. www.fernwoodfitness.com.au

Serial entrepreneur and founder of the premium job site Six Figures, Kelly Magowan is another excellent example of how you can benefit from segmenting your overall market to identify and target a niche market from within. Six Figures is Australia's leading job site for businesses who want to recruit from the top level of job seekers, offering employers access to professionals on more than \$100,000 a year. Instead of appealing to any and every job seeker and employer, Magowan has established a business that effectively assists in the matching process, bringing together the top 10 per cent of jobs with the top 10 per cent of job seekers across all industries and professions, permanent, contract and part-time. Because Magowan has targeted one specific market within the overall recruitment industry, Six Figures has been able to create a solid reputation and a strong brand identity that is known for matching highly talented individuals to top employers. www.sixfigures.com.au

By now I hope you can see that, irrespective of the business concept, you will create greater leverage and strength by targeting a specific niche market with unmet needs.



*Activities to help
you identify which
business is right
for you*

To help you to realise the type of business you should be involved in, complete the following activities. The objective is to help you identify where your interests, strengths and key skills lie.

Exercise 1

1. What are you interested in? What are you passionate about? (This can include causes, such as water conservation, environmental or social interests.)
2. What are your hobbies? What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
3. What are your key strengths? What do you do best? (Perhaps you are a fantastic cook; maybe you have a great ability to write or draw; or you might have specialist skills developed from your professional career.)

Exercise 2

1. Briefly describe a situation where you thought 'If only there was a ...', 'Wouldn't it be great if someone ...?'
2. Now write down how you would do things better? How could you improve the situation?

Exercise 3

1. Reflect on what you have just written. Is there an idea there? How could you capitalise on these strengths or interests in the form of a business?

Chapter Two

Capitalise on the trend

Changing world trends are just the place to start your search for the elusive next big thing! Trends are driven by a range of factors, including pop culture, media, news, innovation and the arts. However, more often than not, changing and evolving consumer needs dictate and underline world trends. To be successful in business you need to be aware of what is going on in the world around you. What are the hot buttons that will have consumers eagerly opening their purses and wallets to make a purchase? Underlying the success of many businesses is the identification of changing world trends.



Trendsetters are successful entrepreneurs because they set a pattern of behaviour that is readily emulated but rarely surpassed. A good place to start when considering setting up a business is to examine the trends that have influenced you. Once you have done this, take a look at a few major trends and see if you can determine why they were successful. If you can predict where future trends are heading you can effectively identify ideas that are worth pursuing.

It is important, however, to be able to distinguish between a trend and a fad. Anything that has staying power can be classified as a trend. A trend evolves and develops gradually, following a sequence of events that allows you to trace it back to its origins. Trends do not start out with immediate acceptance; it is only after a period of time that they become mainstream. Trends tend to have a social, political or economic influence. Fads are here today, gone tomorrow; they don't tend to become mainstream — a bit like a one-hit-wonder song. You can still capitalise on a fad if you're smart enough to get in and out before the fad has passed, but your success will be very much dependent on timing.

Spotting trends takes research; you need to be observant and alert to changes in popular culture. Read newspapers and magazines, especially those from popular and fashionable cities as these are where trends are often born. Go online, read blogs, watch TV, especially the news and popular shows — what topics are they canvassing, what are their similarities, what are the main themes? Look at large corporate companies and research where they are spending their product- and market-research dollars. Do all that you can to stay on top of what's hot and what's not ... and what will be in the future.

You don't need to do a lot of deep thinking to figure out what's a good idea or trend; a simple Google News Search based on topics of interest and potential trends will produce results you can analyse. Not all the results returned by the search will be relevant, but this helps demonstrate whether a trend is a no-brainer.

Let's examine some hot trends and potential business ideas that could well lead you to the next big thing. I have provided some great examples of businesses from around the world that are already successfully riding

these money-making trends. Hopefully you can glean some inspiration and come up with a slightly different idea of your own.

Trend 1: Customisation and appealing to individual needs

Some years ago businesses competed by producing goods and services en masse. Products and services were simply commodities. But as time passed, more and more businesses produced the same uniform commodities so business owners found they needed another way to differentiate their products and services. The nineties produced a dramatic change: the marketing gurus started to run the show. Powerful marketing strategies tapped in to the consumer's psyche, emotionally trapping the customer. There is no better example of this than the marketing strategies that have successfully got teenagers to spend \$300 on a pair of runners made in China for probably 10 per cent of what they sell for.

The New Age consumer has arrived. The era of 'individual marketing' and the need for customisation has dawned. We simply know too much. We have unprecedented access to information. As a result we have become far savvier consumers. In the coming years more and more consumers will prefer to purchase products and services that cater to their individual needs. To remain competitive, businesses will need to focus on these needs, customising products and services accordingly. Mass production of identical products and services will be replaced by the flexible production of customised products.

The consumer's desire for customisation has enormous implications. It is predicted that many consumers will, if they haven't already done so, turn 'anti-brand'. This emerging trend will see many large well-branded companies ducking for cover. Their challenge will be to find new ways to build customer relationships and provide genuine individual customer service. But due to their size and scale, these larger businesses will find it difficult to create the personalised touches and experiences desired by the New Age consumers. Smaller businesses have a greater opportunity to personally engage their customers by better

understanding the consumers' needs and developing products and services accordingly — offering excellent opportunities for the savvy entrepreneur in the process.

To make the most of this emerging trend, consider the many products and services people consume on a daily basis. How many of these do customers wish were more tailored to their specific individual needs? Now consider whether there is a smaller group within the overall group that you could successfully satisfy. Have you got a subset of individuals in mind? Voilà! You are on the road to a great business idea.

All types of products and services can be customised. Clothing can be made to order; food can be specially prepared to suit individual palates; children's toys can be made on demand, customised to the child's favourite colours and branded with their name. This trend favours small business owners: they can readily tailor production and manufacturing of products or services because, unlike larger businesses, they don't produce in large volumes. The devotees of custom-made are also willing to pay for individuality so small business owners who customise to suit the needs of their target market have a real opportunity to charge, with justification, premium prices.

Some examples of industries and products that lend themselves to customisation are:

- fragrances
- cosmetics
- skincare creams
- clothing
- cards and gift wrapping
- hand-crafted personal diaries
- photo albums.

Let's look at some examples of innovative businesses that have achieved great success catering to the individual needs of consumers.

Me and Goji retail made-to-order breakfast cereal online. They provide their customers with the opportunity to mix and match up to 70 different

ingredients to create their very own unique breakfast cereal.
www.meandgoji.com

Evlove Intimates makes ‘made to order’ intimate lingerie. Evlove offers customers the opportunity to create personalised lingerie products through a direct-selling distribution model. Customers design their own lingerie by selecting from a number of designs, samples, fabrics, appliqués and accessories. www.evloveintimates.com

Aussie Murals produce bold and exciting wallpaper feature walls, panels, canvases and photographic murals. They provide a custom service, allowing their customers to tap into their own creative juices. You can choose a design and custom colour it to suit your taste or existing décor, or you can personalise your mural or canvas by sending them a photo or your favourite artwork or an individual design. www.aussiemurals.com.au

MyShape is an online retail store where women can find clothing matched to their measurements and body shape. The founders of MyShape were inspired by a common problem shared by women of all ages and sizes: ‘finding clothes that both fit well and flatter the various body shapes’. www.myshape.com

You can see from the examples above that the owners of these businesses have in each case identified a viable niche of consumers who desired an end product customised to their specific requirements. They have then provided their target market with that opportunity to customise.

Trend 2: Go green

Protecting the environment and better managing the world’s limited resources is a growing industry. There is a wave of concern and realisation that the consumption of certain goods and services is having a negative impact on the environment. We are already seeing signs of this developing into an industry with a number of new products and services designed to help protect and better manage our environment. In fact, many large corporations have already seen the economic and

environmental sense of going green. Recently, media mogul Rupert Murdoch of News Corp launched a major initiative aimed at bringing the company's carbon emissions footprint down to zero by 2010. News Corp plans to achieve this significant reduction by:

- providing incentives for Fox Entertainment employees to buy hybrid vehicles
- placing energy-efficient products at various media outlets like the *New York Post*
- investing in green-friendly initiatives such as a wind farm in India to offset carbon emissions.

You can bet that when the likes of News Corp start to implement environmentally friendly practices and activities the industry for sustainable products and services is set to take off.

Society will continue to move away from activities that harm the planet. The recent shift from the use of plastic bags at the supermarket to calico and paper bags is a clear example of how consumer behaviour is changing, reflecting a greater concern for the protection of our planet and an awareness of the need to become environmentally friendly.

The state of our environment provides a number of opportunities for the budding entrepreneur — when environmentalism meets business you get enviro-preneurship! Individuals and businesses will come to depend upon technologies, products and services to provide for the long-term sustainability of our natural environment. With a little creative thinking there is a fantastic opportunity to create products and services designed to effectively replace what is currently available and satisfy the world's need for sustainability. In years to come more and more consumers will base purchasing decisions on the positive or negative impact their purchases have on the wellbeing of the environment. Recognising we live in a world of finite natural resources, consumers will be forced to do their part. Out of necessity, sustainability will become the norm.

Areas where new and innovative products and services will emerge include:

- biodegradable products and services
- alternative means of producing energy, e.g. solar energy
- recycling programs
- reducing pollution such as carbon emissions
- reducing water consumption
- education programs for business and individuals — how to better manage our finite resources.

The flip side to recycling is ‘heirloom products’. Instead of purchasing recyclable products that are used for a relatively short time before disposal, consumers are starting to look for long-lasting, iconic products that can be passed on to following generations. There are opportunities for future businesses to find ways to adapt timeless quality to high-tech gadgets. The development of improved, high-quality, longer-lasting products will also create new trading sites. We will probably see a boom in luxury second-hand and vintage stores, both online and off.

So how can you go green and take advantage of this growing trend? Do a bit of research; start to look into what will be the major environmental challenges ahead. Then examine how you can play a role in successfully overcoming these challenges with a modern business solution. Now this is not to suggest you need to be a superhero; you don’t need to locate millions of dollars to build a laboratory with the aim of discovering the solution to global warming! It’s all about looking at the environmental issues on a relatively small scale. Take, for example, the innovative mums who came up with the simple and effective concept of designer shopping bags. Janina Byrne and Celina Jorgensen are the founders of www.envirotrend.com.au, a concept they came up with over a bottle of Champagne in 2006. They spotted a gap in the market: while being environmentally conscious is important to both women, neither was keen on toting around ordinary green bags — especially outside the supermarket. These fashionistas took the typical green shopping bag and gave it a timely makeover; their designer shopping bags are made from 100 per cent recyclable non-woven polypropylene. Such was the success of this simple and effective idea that their first shipment of the initial

product, the EnviroShopper™, a stylish alternative to supermarket green bags, sold out in just three months.

So you can see you don't necessarily have to come up with a groundbreaking solution to the world's environmental problems. Instead, just think what you can do that is in line with the growing trend towards environmentalism. To help get your creative juices flowing, let's look at some more creative business concepts from around the world. These are innovative businesses that are making a living from helping to protect the environment and relieve the demand on our scarce resources.

Todae have a great a range of ecologically sustainable products and services to help consumers and business owners maintain and develop a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Instead of inventing new environmental products and services, Todae conveniently grouped a range of selected products and services in the one location, making it easier for the customer to choose and use environmentally friendly products. As well as household consumables (such as cleaning and body care products), there are energy- and water-saving devices for the home and office such as shower timers, low-energy lighting, biodegradable pens and recycled printing paper — all designed to help consumers reduce environmental damage. They also offer practical advice on how to cut down energy and water use and to offset the carbon emissions from your car, home or from air travel. www.todae.com.au

Ecolimo also spotted an excellent business concept that was in line with the growing going-green, environmental trend. Ecolimo offers Melbourne's first environmentally friendly limousine service using the hybrid Lexus GS 450h luxury sports sedan. They recognise more and more people will choose green technology to reduce their carbon footprint and accordingly have given the consumer a choice. www.ecolimo.com.au

Realising that a growing number of consumers are opting for non-chemical-based cleaning products, the founder of Cinderella Bex Gold designed ecologically sound home-cleaning products. Cinderella products are 100 per cent safe for the environment, replacing the need for petroleum distillates, ammonia or phosphates to clean the home. The

ingredients of the Cinderella product range contain plant-based surfactants from renewable resources that are nine times more biodegradable than standard surfactants. www.cinderella.com.au

Trend 3: Time is money

Time is the new currency. More and more people are searching for ways, products and services to give them back quality time — from the humble microwave that speeds up cooking time to GPS devices that take us where we want to go without the need to waste time checking a traditional road map.

Here is your opportunity to make a little money by giving back to the consumer his or her ‘time’. What service or product could you produce that saves time or gives back time to the consumer? There are many daily activities that we all undertake which consume our time, but what if you could eliminate one of these activities? Let’s consider quickly the Australian-based real estate site www.realestate.com.au. Since 2000 this site has meant homebuyers no longer need to go from one real estate office to another looking for properties. Founder Simon Baker literally brought the homes for sale to the buyer’s fingertips, not only saving prospective buyers precious time but also allowing them the luxury of viewing potential properties all from the comfort of their own home.

There is no doubt that over the past decade our lifestyles have become increasingly hectic and chaotic — we are busier than ever. Consumers will continue to source ways and means to save time. In our parents’ era, hiring a cleaner was unheard of unless you were filthy rich. Nowadays you don’t have to be rich, simply time-poor. It is quite the norm to pay someone to do your ‘dirty work’. Eating out or ordering in is no longer considered a luxury; it’s a necessity for many people. First it was takeaway and home-delivery outlets that caught on to this trend. Then the Internet became an important tool, not only for diners but shoppers as well. With precious little time available, why bother getting into the car to go to the shops, fighting for a car space then dealing with the hustle and bustle of other shoppers, all for a loaf of bread? Using the Internet to make routine

purchases and have them delivered is fast, convenient and easy. This evolving trend continues to provide opportunities for the budding entrepreneur. When you work hard and play hard there is little time left to scrub the toilet. So what can you do to save time for a select group of consumers? There is an endless list of tasks that could be outsourced, from walking the dog and gardening to cleaning the house or doing that most evil of things, the ironing. If you can find a way to make the life of a modern career-focused, overworked, extremely busy individual easier, then that consumer will reward you handsomely — after all, time is money.

Many women are returning to pursue careers with a family in tow, creating opportunities for the budding entrepreneur to come up with creative ways to save these mums time.

Look at your own daily routine. What are the activities that consume a great deal of your time over the course of a day? Could these be outsourced?

Some areas where time could be saved include:

- household errands
- the care of elderly parents
- housework and home maintenance.

Think about all the time-consuming activities that today's time-poor consumer will undertake in their lifetime: buying a car, purchasing a house, arranging a wedding, choosing electronic equipment, preparing the house for the arrival of a baby, locating the right school — the list goes on. These are all areas where the smart entrepreneur can step in, satisfy a need and make a little money. Let's take a look at some successful time-saving concepts that have been transformed into operational businesses.

DoMyStuff.com is an online community where busy people can quickly find assistants to complete their chores. Errands can range from the mundane, such as mowing the lawn or picking up dry cleaning, to the extraordinary, such as arranging dinner with a celebrity or chartering a