



girlfriends, Cathy and Helen about fulfilling our uni days plan to open a coffee shop together, but they had other commitments and couldn't do it.

Then the inevitable happened. My house was broken into and the thieves raided my jewellery and lots of other accessories. The insurance company guided me to the websites where I was to choose my replacement items and...oh my God...I fell in love with all the beautiful things... everything!!! I wanted it all...and the seed was planted...the solution to having all the beautiful things was the birth of Medusa Charm.

**You started the store with a friend?**

I wanted to open the store sooo badly but I needed help...I couldn't do it on my own. I called my daughters and proposed the idea to them. One was over the moon...the other almost had me committed. Persistence paid off, however. Planning everything on paper and backing every idea up with an alternative plan convinced my youngest to give the go ahead also. That's all I needed... finally someone to say "it's a great idea... let's do it!" ... and so we did.

**Did you have prior experience?**

I had no prior experience in retail except for working in dad's mixed business when I was a child, and neither did Sarah but we thought "how hard can it be?" Lana was the only one who had the retail experience and that was a tad scary because she was the reluctant one.

**Before you opened, did you do any research?**

For months since the decision was made, I read and en-

quired about this type of business and went out and talked to many shop owners about theirs. The reports were mostly positive and this was very encouraging. The excitement grew by the minute. We could hardly wait.

**How did you find a space?**

Finding a space was the hardest part of our venture. We spent many hours, days, months searching the internet, papers, agencies and going on sites to find a suitable shop. When we thought we had found a space, agents lied or negotiated poorly and the deals fell through. This was very disheartening. Other spaces were way out of our budget and after six months of searching we started to become dismayed. Then one day I decided I will give Thakral Holdings a go. I have always loved Brighton - Le - Sands, spent most of my spare time there, and even though we thought it was a bit of a ghost town during the day, we also thought that what we had in mind may work. The only obstacle was the rent...could we afford it? There was only one way to find out... ASK!! We did and ...to cut a long story short....here we are now.

**What was it like when you opened?**

We opened accidentally one night as we were checking out what the place would look like once it opened and making last minute adjustments. Before we knew it the shop was full of customers and we all went into shock mode. There was no money in the till...we hadn't even practiced how to use the till... and customers were queuing up at the counter... 'I guess we're open' I yelled out to the girls and then it was on...the three of us could hardly keep up.

It was an overwhelming feeling that none of us will forget. It way exceeded, and still exceeds our expectations and we have all our loyal customers to thank for that.

**How did word get around opening week. Did you promote or was it just word of mouth?**

We did not do any promotional work for the business. We were flat out working to get it together and open and we were going to work on the promotional side once it was fully operational. For weeks regular visitors to the area

were asking us when we would open, the tourists from the Novotel were begging us to open before they left...friends and relatives constantly did the promotional work for us.

Tekno at Zande cafe, our neighbours, was beginning to harass customers to shop at our shop...thanks Tekno!! We love you.

**Did you meet your sales expectations?**

**Did you have any?**

The most frightening thing about opening a new business is wondering whether you have the right area, the right products, the right prices and whether or not there will be any customers. Those thought were constantly needling at me and, I have to admit, even though I put on a brave face for the girls' sake, I was terrified! I even went out and

bought hundreds of dollars worth of craft materials to make cards so that I don't get bored on the quiet days. I needn't have worried, however. Not only did we meet our

**future?**

It is too early to say what our plans for the future are. I am not sure if I am ready to give up teaching forever and the girls are not sure if they want



sales expectations, we surpassed them and my craft materials remain untouched.

**How many people work in the store?**

The store is run by the three of us on alternate days.

**Where do you get the items from?**

Our stock is brought in from all corners of the world; Europe, Asia, USA and of course, our local suppliers here in Australia.

**What are your plans for the**

to give up their chosen careers either.

We are looking into opening a second store and if we do that, I guess it will be sometime before I am in a classroom again. We'll take things day by day at the moment and see how we go.

All we can say right now is "we are loving it!!"

**Maria thank you so much. All the best in the future**

Looking forward to seeing you at Medusa Charm



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