

The gift of success



Louise Curtis could never have imagined chocolate bouquets could prove the key to a franchise sensation

Louise Curtis is the founder and managing director of Lollypotz, a Canberra-based online and retail business specialising in chocolate gift bouquets.

Established in December 2008, Lollypotz is a fast growing franchise operation with 25 franchises nationally.

Despite her success, Curtis is not prepared to rest on her laurels. There are plans to roll out another 35 franchises nationally and to take Lollypotz international.

"I have a saying stuck on the wall of my office," she says. "It says 'don't let the best you have done so far be the standard for the rest of your life'. That's how I like to live my life."

In true rags to riches style, Curtis left school at 15 with no qualifications but soon discovered a natural flair for business management, facilitating the growth of her employer's business from a two-person operation to one employing 50 staff in five offices nationally.

Curtis moved to Canberra to open a branch office of a mortgage brokerage and when she was unable to source attractive, top quality gift hampers to send

to clients, the savvy businesswoman started making her own. It wasn't long before she realised the potential of the idea and launched her first business, online and retail corporate gift supplier Hamperesque, from her living room. It



The response to the innovative retailing concept has caught everyone, including Curtis, by surprise

was an immediate success in 2003; the business now dispatches up to 50,000 hampers annually.

In 2008, Curtis won the Australian Capital Territory's Telstra Business Women's Awards' Yellow Business

Owner and Nokia Business Innovation categories for her work with Hamperesque.

Last year saw the introduction of chocolate treats in hand made bouquets.

The business was born out of frustration at trying to achieve a same-day service for Hamperesque. "I went down the path of trying to franchise it but it was too hard because of the stock – we carry \$300,000 worth of stock. People didn't look at this as something to spend that much money on getting into."

So she bought a chocolate bouquet business, changed all the stock and put in a new range which brought in 500 orders straight up.

"I wanted to spend the Telstra Woman award money on something innovative so I split the business in two. Ninety per

cent of the orders are online, and we have a call centre here and as orders come through they are sent out to franchisees. We had 40 orders this morning by 10.30," she reveals.

Now Curtis is getting same day delivery