



# Carolyn Creswell

of Carman's Kitchen

Usually when the average 18-year-old manages to scrape together \$1,000, you might expect them to put it towards a car, or perhaps blow the lot on a trip to Bali.

Not Carolyn Creswell.

Unbelievably at 18, Carolyn found herself offering her life savings to buy out her employer.

"It was a small business that made home-made muesli for a few cafes and delis in and around Melbourne", Carolyn says.

"I worked there one day a week while I was at Uni, and I loved it. When the owners put the business up for sale, I thought my job would be in jeopardy so I offered them \$1,000 which was initially dismissed, and then finally they took up my offer."

The subsequent growth of Carman's is the stuff of entrepreneurial dreams.

During her time in business, Carolyn has recently won the 2012 Telstra Australian Business Woman of the Year Awards, the 2009 InStyle Women of Style Awards, the 2008 Veuve Clicquot Award which is presented to honour exceptional women in business, and the winner of the 2007 Ernst & Young's 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year' Award.



**Q What do you love most about your business?**

I love food! I love the culture around food and more importantly I love real whole food. Everyone has to eat and make a choice on whether it's good quality that they are eating, if my products make a difference in people's lives, even better.

**Q What advice can you give to others who are starting out?**

Sometimes opportunities can come your way, but sometimes the opportunity presents itself and you have to seize them. You need to take risks, get off the couch and have a go. Put yourself out there, it's ok to be vulnerable.

**Q What do you wish you had known before you started in business?**

I was too much of a yes person in the beginning. I'm now a big advocate of Steve Jobs and being able to say "no". I now have the sense of knowing when to say "yes". In the end, I'm really focused on doing the best things for our brand and business.

**Q What are some of the biggest business challenges you have faced and how have you overcome these?**

My biggest challenge was getting into the supermarkets. We lost a contract due to poor sales which was devastating. My success has come from what I have learnt. I have really changed the way I operate and I never gave up. Next step was finding a niche and almost being paranoid through the rough patches. I kept asking myself what can I do better and how can I improve the business. I always did the best I could in the circumstances I was in. I have always been inner focused, not getting wrapped up in my competitors, but really focusing on being the best I can for the brand.

**Q What motivates you to continue growing your business?**

That's easy, the pride in my business. I love what I do, I love going to work. It gives me enjoyment and lifelong purpose. I love a good challenge and working on how we can get around them.

**Q Who is your role model/ inspiration and why?**

There are an enormous amount of people..

Elizabeth Broderick - Sex Discrimination Commissioner of Australia. I admire her forthright approach. In a business sense - Richard Branson. Plus there is Jacqueline Novogratz - Acumen Fund in New York, I recently heard her speak, she is very inspiring.

My mum! I love my mum, she keeps me grounded. You get inspiration from all walks of life.

**Q What's the best business advice you have been given?**

Love John McGrath and I take on board his advice - he really has his life together, he is a real role model for me. "People want to work with a boss who has their life together" Plus I have learnt to be less controlling in business, always outcome focused, but I don't need to do everything.

Finally, "Drive it like you stole it" - just run with it! You don't know if it will work or not but you have just got to try.