



Homeware shines at the Butler table

Peter Switzer
Success story

IMAGINE swanning around the world looking for the classiest products to sell to discerning homeware buyers, hanging out with Nigella Lawson and, at the same time, building quite a lucrative business.

That's what Margaret Butler has achieved in 13 years with her Anasazi Trading, which sells quality homeware products to top retailers in Australia and New Zealand.

The brands include Interdesign, Nigella Lawson, Method, Umbra and signature brand Anasazi Homewares. The business has put in a stellar performance with an annual compound growth around 40 per cent, on a turnover of more than \$10 million.

"The company is 100 per cent privately owned and operated by its founder," Butler says. "It sounds cliched, but it all started from humble beginnings in a friend's garage."

With a background in the textile industry, Butler has put together a collection of products to attract a New Age, house-proud consumer.

"While working in the textile industry, I could sense the homeware industry was a market that was on the verge of exploding with opportunities," Butler says.

"Founding Anasazi allowed me to design, manufacture, import and distribute beautiful products with a point of difference."

The business was started on

\$10,000 but Butler says she keeps a close watch on her cash, which has funded the company's growth.

"The business has been profitable since its first year and this profit has increased year after year," she says. "I have always been very particular about maintaining profit margins. In retail, this is a vital ingredient to long-term success. I also keep a close eye on cash-flow management, stock turns, payment dates and collections."

Anasazi's latest coup is to distribute television cook Lawson's Living Kitchen range of products.

"I am in regular contact with Nigella Lawson (for) business decisions, new product lines and innovative ways to present and store food," Butler says. "Nigella will be coming to Australia this year to promote the brand."

On what other aspiring businesswomen should know, Butler is gung-ho. "Firstly, I'd say just go for it," she says. "If you have a business idea and believe you can make a difference, take action. But make sure that you're prepared to put in the hard yards."

She sums it up with the "three Ls". Learn everything about your products, your business and your market. Don't be afraid to lose but you have to learn from the mistakes. Finally, be loyal to those who help you succeed and keep up the positive drive in your business.

"Most importantly, share your success with your team as enthusiasm creates enthusiasm," she says.