Building the Glasshouse Empire

18/04/2018 Founder of Glasshouse Fragrances Nicole Eckels joined the popular woman with drive lunch this year to tell her story of success. She went with a gut instinct when she packed a suitcase and left her native New York for Sydney, Australia. Now, 12 years later she's running a $60 million-dollar candle and fragrance house and never dreamed it would become the success that it has.

Eckels tried her career luck in the corporate world in San Francisco for seven months before craving a sea change. Prior to that she kept busy as a make-up artist at SACS Fifth Avenue in New York.

Armed with a marketing and business background, Eckels set out to try her luck abroad with her eye on England, Dubai or Australia. She didn't want to find the next Manhattan –preferring to land somewhere less frantic.

“I came to Sydney in 2005 on a working holiday and fell in love,” says Nicole Eckels who had an Aussie friend working in New York who also told her she'd love Australia.

“I wanted to find a place that offered a better work life balance for me as a single mum and somewhere good to raise my son. I didn't want him running around on the subway in New York and I didn't have a partner so I wanted a place that felt easier,” she says.

Upon settling in Sydney, Eckels went to the department store David Jones to find a candle to fragrance her apartment. She found one, but the scent didn't live up to her expectations. It planted the seed to start a candle business. The rest is history in the making.

“You have to remember back in 2006 there was nobody really doing scented candles,” says Eckels who is now developing the brand with award-winning chemists to include lotions, shower gels and EDT perfumes.

“When I had the idea to start Glasshouse I didn't have a lot of money but I had a good business plan of what my vision would be from the look and feel of the product, to the way I wanted the business to run,” she says.

Eckels saw a gap in the market at a time when few had the same vision. These days there's many copycats vying for a slice of the lucrative dollar that is the Australian fragrance market, but Eckels says the key to her success is doing the job well.

It's her connection to the company's core female clientele that has kept it more than afloat. Eckels says there has been no additional investment required in the business since it launched.

“Our products are not unlike women who want to drive a Porsche or a performance vehicle,” says Eckels.

“These women aren’t shy – they are confident, know quality and don’t want a fragrance that slips under the radar. We are out there and embrace our position, much like a female Porsche driver,” she says.

“I admire a company like Porsche Australia for recognising that women are interested in cars and spend their business dollar on the women who also like to spend on good cars. Keeping engaged with that core female audience puts a brand ahead – they're trailblazers while others follow,” said Eckels.

Stocked in David Jones, Peter Alexander and Bed, Bath and Beyond, the Sapphire Group now has more than 100 staff with two different brands under its belt – Glasshouse Fragrances and Circa Home. The emphasis is delivering to a niche female audience who thrive on scent, want quality choices and looking for ornamental as well as functional candles in their home.

Consumption data

911 Carrera S (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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