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Moi Moi: bright idea brings sparkling success

By [Jessica Stanic](#) on Tuesday, 16 June 2009

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Sisters
**Lauren
Chang
Sommer**
and
**Alana
Chang
Chang**
have



found **sparkling success** with their business **Moi Moi Fine Jewellery** and have carved out a niche in the **Australian jewellery market**, proving that a diamond is not necessarily a girl's best friend. Alana Chang spoke to *Jessica Stanic* about their **unique business**, and their efforts to create **awareness** for a **product** with little **exposure** in the Australian market.

Moi Moi Fine Jewellery is the first Moissanite concept store to hit our shores. The sisters launched their flagship store in Sydney's Queen Victoria Building in 2004, introducing the world's fastest growing fine jewellery category to Australia and New Zealand.

The Moissanite jewel originated from the US when it was introduced in 1998 by American creators Charles & Colvard. Made from the mineral silicon carbide, it has more brilliance, fire and lustre than any other jewel including diamond, and comes at a fraction of the cost. Alana and Lauren were introduced to the jewel by chance, and were so impressed by its sparkle and vibrance they decided to bring it to Australia.

"My sister was planning her wedding at the time and was on the lookout for some jewellery," explains Alana. "She was dazzled by the Moissanite jewellery, so she went online to look for it, but couldn't find it anywhere. It was on offer in over 70 countries, but not in Australia. We saw an opportunity to create a market for it here."

According to Alana, everything fell into place quite quickly. "Once we got the idea in our heads we set about creating a business plan. We wanted it to be a unique Moissanite concept store. After pitching the idea to an international business developer in Hong Kong and chasing after the distributorship for Australia and New Zealand, we secured the rights to the Moissanite jewel and then set up the store."

The company now boasts 50 percent revenue growth year-on-year and show no signs of slowing down. The economic crisis has done nothing to dampen sales says Alana, as Moissanite is considered a "recession jewel".

"The economic crisis has helped the business considerably and we have the sales to prove it. People are looking for value and there is always someone who needs an engagement ring, wedding ring, anniversary present and birthday present. With Moissanite you are getting more bang for your buck," says Alana.

She is quick to point out that Moissanite is unique jewel in its own right and should not be viewed as a fake diamond. "It has nothing to do with diamonds but a lot of people get it mixed up."

Alana and her sister have worked hard to change this perception and create a market for the jewel in Australia, through a rigorous marketing program.

"Moissanite is such a new product in Australia. It is our job to create awareness for the jewel and for our business."

The sisters place a great deal of emphasis on their online marketing initiatives. Since setting up a Moi Moi Fine Jewellery website, they now have more than 1,000 customers nationwide who buy online, with some even flying in from out of state to buy the jewellery.

"People will jump online for information first, and in that way the website is an important tool for customers. As a business, we wouldn't be able to survive without it."

According to Alana, the key to a successful retail website is to display all products online, ensure the website is easy to navigate around, and to list all prices so customers can make well-informed purchases.

"We make sure that we display all of our products online with the prices, and ensure the website is updated daily. It is important for customers to be able to do their research and find out all about our products," she says.

Building customer relations is high on their list of priorities says Alana as they hold free jewellery appreciation classes every Thursday night. "We talk about Moissanite but also diamonds and other fine jewellery and teach people what to look for when purchasing any fine jewellery. We offer champagne and canapes and create a fun, relaxed atmosphere in which people can appreciate fine jewellery."

The classes are a great way to create awareness for their product, develop personal relationships with customers and establish themselves as a credible source on jewellery. The success of the classes is a testament to the sisters' ability to build their brand, with 60-70 percent of participants converted into sales.

In addition to the classes and the website, the girls send out weekly e-newsletters to subscribers with information about new products, along with birthday and anniversary vouchers. They also visit bridal fairs three times a year to exhibit their jewellery and source new trends.

Alana and Lauren have built Moi Moi Fine Jewellery into a highly successful and credible brand in just five short years. They have single-handedly created a name for Moisanite in Australia and New Zealand, with the backing of a number of high profile celebrities including Delta Goodrem, Natalie Bassingthwaite, Erica Heynatz, Kate Ritchie and the entire cast of Dancing on Ice.

"Celebrity endorsements do help with the credibility of the product," explains Alana. "We often get customers who will come into the store and say, wow, Delta wears it? It elevates their opinion of the jewellery."

So what's next on the horizon for this glamorous pair? "We are looking to franchise the business over the next couple of years and are always on the lookout for potential franchisees."

For more information on Moi Moi Fine Jewellery please visit, www.moimoi.com.au

Alana's top 5 recession-proof business tips:

1. Keep your website up-to-date. It's very important to have an online presence.
2. Know exactly who your customers are and what they want.
3. Have a strong and proven product with a point of difference.
4. Keep up marketing efforts. Utilise free marketing such as social media.
5. Think outside the square – be innovative.

Fast fact about Moi Moi:

The name Moi Moi is the brainchild of Lauren and Alana, which brings together a number of different elements to create a bold and fun statement for the business. The 'Moi' incorporates the first three letters of Moisanite, it means 'sister' in Cantonese, 'beautiful' in Dutch and 'me me' in French – to symbolise the self-purchasing nature of the product.