

with an 'edge' that adults could play with their friends over a bottle or two of wine. We don't specialize in wholesome family games - that market has been cornered by Hasbro.

With that idea in mind, it wasn't too hard to create Nitty Gritty, although coming up with 1000 questions that were intriguing, funny, thought-provoking or slightly risqué was a bit harder!

#### **What drives you?**

One thought - You never regret what you do, only what you don't do.

#### **What did you do that worked?**

We persevered. If we had a set back, we got back up again and tried a difference tack. If one of us is feeling daunted, the other one is optimistic.

On a more practical level, we take every opportunity we can to learn from people who have 'been there, done that'. I can see no point in reinventing the wheel, if we can learn from somebody else's experiences. However, it works even better if you can learn from somebody else's experience and add to it with your own.

We networked. It really is true that who you know is more important than what you know. Everyone has a story you can learn from, and everyone has contacts who can help you.

We also took the plunge and went overseas to the toy fairs in London, Neuremberg and New York. This experience opened our eyes to what games are successful in different markets, and gave us many great contacts.

#### **What did you do that didn't work?**

Jumped in too quickly without taking time to sit back and consider our options. When we first started, we had a sense of urgency that sometimes drove us to make rash decisions. Now that we have more experience, we are more willing to take time, speak to people, do research, canvass options before we make our decisions.

#### **How do you define success?**

I know it's a cliché, but if you are happy, then you are a success. However, we all have different criteria for being happy - for me it involves a thriving business that I created from the ground up, a relationship that keeps me inspired and on my toes and enough money to travel wherever and whenever I want.

#### **How do you fund expansion of your business?**

This is the issue we are juggling with at the moment. We are currently expanding into a number of overseas markets, and of course to do that, we need money. At this stage we are in the process of a further capital-raising from our existing shareholders.

#### **If you could ask a business person you admired three questions, who would you ask? And what three questions would you ask?**

I'd like to speak to the guys who invented Trivial Pursuit. Every person who invents a board game hopes that they have the next Trivial Pursuit on their hands. I'd like to get the 'real' story on how they did it, so I would ask them:

How did you manufacture and distribute the game yourselves, and at what point were you approached for a licensing deal?

What were the setbacks you faced and how did you overcome them?

What were your most successful marketing ploys, and what were your least successful?

Actually, I'd ask them many more questions...but I've hit my limit.

#### **How do you spend a typical day in the business?**

Answering emails, sending emails, phone calls in and out,

writing marketing proposals, organising shipping details, receiving orders, sending orders to our distributor, going to the bank, doing the accounting, ringing the accountant to ask them to fix my mistakes, thinking of new game ideas, meeting other game inventors, test playing other inventor's games, meeting with customers' representatives such as Target....and so it goes!

#### **What are your top five tips for other business owners?**

1. Persevere! Don't let setbacks get you down. If you keep plugging away, it will happen.

2. Processes are important - with efficient processes, the operational side of your business can run smoothly with less input from you.

3. Choosing staff is crucial - find people who are as enthusiastic as you are about your business.

4. Make time to have a life outside of 'work'.

5. Exercise a lot, drink nice wine and eat good chocolate. It will make you a nice person to be around.

#### **What techniques do you employ to achieve your goals?**

I read a lot of business books and magazines for inspiration. For example, I find *Start me Up* by Toney Fitzgerald very inspiring.

My partner and I believe strongly in the power of positive thinking, so we take the time (usually over a glass of wine...sorry, I keep mentioning wine) to revisit our successes and remind ourselves that we can do anything we put our minds to.

I am also not shy in asking people I've just met for advice, ideas, contacts or help.

### **CALLING COMMERCIALISATION EXPERTS CROWN RESEARCH INSTITUTE GOVERNANCE ROLES**



As New Zealand's innovation sector takes a more prominent role in the economy, I am looking to broaden and strengthen the talent pool from which I appoint directors to the boards of Crown Research Institutes. In particular I want to identify appropriately skilled candidates with direct experience in the following areas:

- Commercialisation of science and technology based products and services;
- Direct experience in the capital raising and investment process (as an investor or investee);
- Strong, relevant networks in New Zealand and Australia;
- The above attributes, aligned with strong commercial governance experience.

If you have a passion for the science and innovation sector in New Zealand, and are interested in a role on the board of a Crown Research Institute, please write to me setting out how you have the desired attributes, and why I should consider you for a role on one of the boards. Please attach a full CV with your application. Further information can be found on the Crown Company Monitoring Advisory Unit's website ([www.ccm.au.govt.nz](http://www.ccm.au.govt.nz)), and applications must be received by Monday, 15 March 2004.

*Please reply in the first instance to:*

Hon Pete Hodgson  
Minister for Crown Research Institutes  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON

**Attn: Kyleigh Couch**