

Down to the nitty gritty

So how well do you think you know your partner or best friend, and how well do they know you? **Report** KAREN HALABI

A North Shore couple who invented a board game which tests how well you know your best friend or lover, have set up their own board game company which has already launched four games and has another eight in the pipeline.

Inventor of the Nitty Gritty board game, Nicole Johnschwager, says after launching the game about a year ago she and partner Nathan Ruff were contacted by so many people with their own board game ideas, that they decided to set up After 8 Games to help other people market their weird and wacky game ideas.

"We get at least one call a week from someone who either wants to know how to go about marketing their game or wants us to take on a game they've invented," she said.

"Psychic Challenge and Spin the Bottle are all doing well, but the Analyst and Nitty Gritty are proving the most popular.

"Nitty Gritty, which is available nationally at Target, has already sold 6500 copies even though we were told they'd never sell 500."



Nicole Johnschwager gets down to the proverbial nitty gritty in her game.

Photo: Britta Campion

The couple feel confident taking on Hasbro and Parker Bros – the big boys of the games world – with their independent Australian-designed games.

They even have one for children and a celebrity guessing game in the pipeline.

Less brainy than Trivial Pursuit, more laughs than Pictionary and almost as many lies as Balderdash, Nitty Gritty is guaranteed to turn your next dinner party into a riot.

And you don't need to be a brain or know how to draw. All it takes to be a champion

Do they know if you've ever been skinny dipping, or your favourite perfume? Does he like anchovies on his pizza or has he ever smoked pot or fantasised about a workmate?

"I wanted Nitty-Gritty to capture the fun of late nights with friends – gossiping, telling secrets and killing yourself laughing when you discover unknown things... like your boyfriend wanting to be one of the Village People when he was young," Johnschwager said.

The 33-year-old invented Nitty Gritty while she was sitting in a small, airless office, surrounded by boring files, thinking there must be something better in life.

From this desire for something fun, she came up with Nitty Gritty – 1000 fun, weird, risqué and thought-provoking questions.

Her mission was to find out just how well she really knew her friends and family and what made them tick.

The game is divided into categories such as Skeletons in the Cupboard, Love it/Hate it, Opinions and Dilemmas, and takes about an hour to play.

"It's a great game to play with friends and the more the merrier. It's also a great ice-breaker," Ms Johnschwager said.

She also has second office at North Sydney in her other role as General Manager of Chief Executive Women (CEW), a non-profit association including some of Australia's most high-profile businesswomen.

at Nitty Gritty is to have listened to your team-mate's boring childhood stories, put up with their opinions, know their tastes, and heard their secrets.