

"You've got to do your maths – you've got to enter the market at a pace that you're comfortable with," she says.

Ismiel employs a small team of people, including her husband Sam and daughters Natalie and Nadine, who can learn from their mother's tough negotiating style.

"I guess not [being] willing to take no for an answer – which was the strategy that I used and will continue to use – has helped me greatly along the way."

Inside the business, she tries to be clear and fair.

"I treat every individual in this organisation equally, be it my daughter or the receptionist. Everyone receives equal opportunities for growth."

Away from work, yoga and meditation are important to Ismiel.

"It's a way of life for me... Meditation is a necessity for someone in my position, where you're bombarded with so much information both in your private and your business life."

## Sue Whyte Intimo Lingerie

The jump from a cute children's fashion label to glamorous lingerie seems a leap of faith.

For Sue Whyte, however, it has been a logical extension of her business philosophy: find a strong market niche and go for it.

Now CEO of Intimo Lingerie, Melbourne-born

then you just try, try again ... I never set out to do any courses. I'm a self-taught businesswoman. I've always listened and observed."

Central to her management philosophy is empowering other women through consultancies that cost as little as \$500 to \$1000 to launch. Intimo Consultants run their own business, receive training, motivation and recognition from head office and develop cohesive supportive teams. They are in business for themselves but not by themselves so have the best of both worlds.

While Whyte runs a business with a heart, she rules with a firm hand.

"Intimo is not just my business," explains Whyte. "It is the sum of all our individual consultants' businesses. I am very conscious of this, so every decision made must be done for the benefit of the organisation as a whole."

The major challenge, according to Whyte,



**"Without good financial planning no business will succeed. Intimo would not be where it is today without a solid financial base." Sue Whyte Intimo Lingerie**

Whyte inherited from her grandmother a love of fabrics and fashion, which has been put to good use in the past decade.

Starting with a staff of five, Intimo filled a niche for a brand of lingerie in extended sizes. Today it is a multi-million-dollar company with 50 staff and more than 1000 consultants.

As a manager, Whyte has the entrepreneurial spirit of her mother's side of the family (they fled Europe and the war in the 1940s and set up coffee plantations in Cuba and diamond houses in Houston and Paris).

"I've always been surrounded by business and I've always been surrounded by risk takers," she says, adding that those early lessons were more powerful than anything she could have learned at university.

"I understood from a very early age that if you fail

has been growing Intimo from a family-style "little corporation" into a major business. She advises others to get a skilled accountant and pays tribute to her business partner, former Deloitte chartered accountant David Fountain, who has helped raise turnover from \$8 million to about \$22 million in less than five years at Intimo.

If a business gets just one thing right, according to Whyte, it must be financial planning.

"Without good financial planning no business will succeed. Intimo would not be where it is today without a solid financial base."

And her final message: start with a strong business plan as a foundation.

Whyte explains: "As long as the plans are there and the foundations are strong, you can take it where you want to."

