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A 'cheeky' entrepreneur's success story



Overview Who: Ruth Gallace What: Rebello Wines Career: Leadership Type: Personal Story

Bottom Line Ruth Gallace, the CEO of boutique fruit winery and cider house Rebello was recently awarded finalist in 'Women in Business' in the 2013 Australian Excellence Awards.

Since the introduction of Cheeky Rascal cider just two years ago, the company has registered 880% growth in the first year alone and it's products are now sold all around Australia.

1. What made you start creating the ciders 2 years ago? And where did the inspiration for the name 'Cheeky Rascal' come from?

We had seen great success with our fruit wines made from strawberries from our family farm (Sunny Ridge on the Mornington Peninsula), and in particular Strawbellini (an innovative blend of strawberry wine with moscato) which was the only Australian sparkling to be awarded a double gold medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition along with France's renowned Veuve Clicquot and America's Piper Sonoma.

We saw a niche in the market for real fruit cider. Our winemaker Wayne and I approached my husband with the concept and the first batch of Strawberry Apple and a straight Apple were bottled 6 months later. We pre-sold that batch, so we quadrupled volume on the second batch and that pre-sold too. We knew then we were onto something.

The name Cheeky Rascal is an extension of Rebello. 'Rebello' is a play on the word rebel in Italian, bringing together Matt's (my partner) family heritage with our Cheeky approach. We have a respect for the traditional rules of how wine and cider are made but a healthy disrespect for the rules on how it should taste. Whilst quality is imperative in everything we do, we certainly have a cheeky and irreverent approach.

- 2. What is the most important lesson you have learned about business so far? 1. Identify problems first, and think strategically to find the right solution. 2. Empower people and notice strengths - be connected. 3. Focus and specialise on your own area. 4. Learn from mistakes. 5. Have confidence to say no.

3. Did you face any challenges when initially making and promoting the ciders? How did you overcome these? The majority of our challenges have come from experiencing rapid growth. Many lessons have been learnt along the way in regards to time management, effective delegation, nurturing a good company culture, cash flow and hiring the right people for the right job.

4. What is your leadership style? Inclusive and open to staff suggestions, encouraging creative thinking, innovation and empowering the team to execute their ideas.

5. What is the best piece of advice you were given while running Rebello? Just one, there's been so many! 'If you keep doing what you've always got, you'll always get what you've always got!'

6. What is the best advice you'd give to someone now regarding running a business 8 years later? Make sure you're passionate about your business and fully understand what you're getting into. I think a lot of people go into their own business of lifestyle and flexibility reasons. Whilst having your own business certainly does give you that element of autonomy, successful entrepreneurs work harder and more hours than you could ever ask any employee to work. To be successful you need passion, courage and persistence.

7. Describe yourself using one word. Cheeky!

8. How did you balance a young family with establishing a business? Any tips for our readers? Don't try to do everything at once and don't try to be everything to everyone. I think it's important to understand that everyone has limitations, we don't have infinite resources of time and energy. I accept that there's going to be times of the year where I need to have a stronger focus on my business but I make up for it by taking time out for my children when ever I can in quieter periods, sometimes I need to create these quieter periods.

Having good support is also absolutely essential, you can't focus on work if you're worried about your children. I also do my best to make the most of the time I have with my children by putting my phone aside, being present and getting involved in their interests.

If you have any questions or would like to suggest new topics please drop us your thoughts below. For more useful tips and updates follow Leaders in Heels on Twitter and visit our Facebook Page.

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Rashida Tayabali Editor of Leaders in Heels and freelance writer. I can be found at my desk most days, trying to finish deadlines with my one-year old sitting on my lap. Sydney, Australia.

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