

# women of the world wide web

Sharon Givoni – Deacons, Graham & James

**theLounge.com.au**

**Emma Rosenberg (Director of Business Development of theLounge) tells why she decided to leave the security and benefits of a lucrative position as a corporate lawyer with one of Australia's biggest private companies to punt on a vision of a new women's internet community.**

"TheLounge.com.au" is an Australian lifestyle destination site that combines direct e-commerce with editorial content and information and is aimed directly at Australian women. Although it only launched in mid-December, it is already one of the 10 most popular shopping sites in Australia and has been rated as one of the most popular Australian lifestyle sites. theLounge aims to build an online community of Australian women, a place where women can entertain themselves, share ideas, access expert advice, research issues of importance, indulge themselves and shop.

## What is your background?

I did my articles at Clayton Utz in 1992 after which I worked at Blake Dawson Waldron in the Corporate and Commercial Group for 3 years, where I became a senior associate. I then spent two years in the Investment Banking group at Merrill Lynch (Emma has an economics degree with a major in accounting and finance). From there I joined the Pratt Group, and worked as a corporate lawyer in the Legal and Commercial Group. My time at the Pratt Group was cut short after just 6 months in this role as I was approached by Julie Tylman, an investment banker from San Francisco,

Silicon Valley (and current CEO of theLounge), to co-found what is now theLounge.com.au.

## What made you decide to leave the law?

I was excited by the idea of creating something which I thought was going to be of value for Australian women and pleased to be able to participate in the world of IT. I had already left the law (to work as an investment banker) and returned once before. Each time it wasn't for any lack of love or enjoyment of the law that I left; it was just that two fantastic opportunities were presented to me, each of which enabled me to broaden my experience base.

## How was theLounge created?

Julie Tylman and I prepared a detailed business plan and raised seed funding from private investors in Australia. We also worked closely with Rachele Unreich, our Editor (who also holds a law degree) to establish the voice, style and content of the site - the way we wanted theLounge to "look and feel". At the same time we were engaging recruitment consultants, hiring staff and engaging a Web site developer to build the site. For the first three months my previous employer was kind enough to loan us some spare office space while we found premises.

## How did you go about marketing the site?

Being Australia's first internet site designed exclusively for women, it attracted a great deal of media interest, prior to the commencement of our marketing campaign. The site went on-line on 13 December 1999 and we had planned a formal launch for early February 2000 (internet sites are always tested for a period before formal launch to ensure the technology is robust). The media

interest we have experienced over the last three months has been overwhelming and well beyond what we had anticipated. Going forward, we will utilise traditional, and what are called "guerrilla marketing" techniques to continually promote theLounge.

## How have you promoted your site?

Our off-line advertising campaign commenced in February 2000 and has included:

- billboards;
- radio advertising;
- press advertising;
- online advertising;
- street promotions and sponsorships (guerilla marketing)
- advertising on buses; and
- cinema advertising.

## Who invented the name "theLounge"?

We called our site "theLounge" because we wanted it to be a comfortable and friendly place for women on the net. Research shows that many women are still only using the net for e-mail and find the net useful, although often alienating. We wanted to create a user-friendly site for women that is as easy to use as reading a magazine. There is no need to download any programs or plug-ins to use any of the resources at theLounge.

## What does your role involve?

My title is Director, Business Development. Basically I work on the business strategy and the general direction of theLounge. I spend a lot of time building relationships and partnerships with key players both in and out of the IT industry and planning for the next stage of our rapidly expanding business. Add to this capital raising responsibility and acting as the inhouse (or should I say

inLounge) legal and commercial manager and you get the picture of where all my time goes.

## **What does a typical day involve for you?**

My job involves a mixture of office work and meetings. I generally arrive at the office by 8am and spend at least an hour reviewing and responding to emails that I have received overnight. I spend a fair part of my day meeting other players in the internet/technology industry or other players in the women's consumer market. I spend time reviewing the market, considering market research, preparing proposals, reviewing potential marketing proposals and reviewing and negotiating arrangements with third parties. At the moment I am also acting as the spokesperson for theLounge which can be quite time consuming.

## **How has your legal background assisted you with your tasks in this job?**

A good commercial lawyer learns very quickly about thinking outside the square and effective problem solving. I utilise these skills every day at theLounge where we are constantly confronted with new issues and challenges. More specifically, my corporate law background assisted me with the capital raising and structuring of the business. Legal training certainly teaches both communication skills and attention to detail both of which I think are crucial in any business.

## **Is the Web site interactive?**

We are introducing chat rooms and discussion boards in the next couple of weeks and the site will become increasingly more interactive as it moves forward. Longer term we will be offering "ask the expert" in relevant interest areas and further down the track we would like to get involved in interactive television. Certainly, there are numerous ways in which our users communicate with us throughout the site both directly, through the submission of content and participation in promotions, and indirectly through usage patterns.

## **What areas are covered by the site?**

It's still in its infancy and is growing very quickly. The areas we currently have on the site are:

- General interest (topical information, entertainment)
- Face & body;
- Home & Living;
- Pregnancy & Baby; and
- Shopping;

We are also about to introduce Career, Bridal and Food & Wine sections and are working on Finance and Health.

## **Does your site offer internet shopping?**

Yes. We currently offer products for sale in each of the categories and users can buy everything from homewares to beauty products to baby safety products.

It is often said that privacy and security are one of the major constraints to e-commerce. In your experience, have you found this to be the case?

I think it is a question of communication and education - it is about informing users that you will respect their privacy. With regards to respecting our members' privacy, if you register as a member of theLounge and provide us with your details (including email address) your details will only be used for the purpose of providing you with the information that you have requested. For example, a member can register to receive our newsletter. These details are stored on our secure server and are not made public to any third party whatsoever.

In terms of security, we have ensured that our e-commerce facilities are 100% secure. Our secure-server software encrypts your credit card number so that no one else can read it, and we guarantee all purchases against fraud, which means that our customers will not be out of pocket if their credit card details are stolen and used on our site. This means you pay nothing if unauthorized charges are made to your card as a result of shopping at theLounge. We have also drafted a privacy policy bearing in mind the National Principles for the Fair Handling of Personal Information.

## **How do you deliver the products directly to users and in what time frame?**

We generally deliver all products ordered on our site by courier or

Australia Post. The goods are guaranteed for delivery between 7 to 10 days, however, our average turnaround time is generally 4 days anywhere in Australia. The customer pays for the delivery fee.

## **Does your site use cookies?**

We use cookies to enhance the experience of the user. However, they can always be turned off at the user's discretion. Even without a cookie, you can still use most of the features at theLounge including placing items in your shopping bag and purchasing them, however you will not be able to leave the site and return at a later stage and continue shopping with the items you selected previously, as this information is stored in the cookie.

## **How does theLounge earn its revenue?**

Through e-commerce, advertising and sponsorships.

## **How do you intend to prevent others from copying the ideas in your Web site?**

This industry is moving so fast that we have very little time to ponder what our competitors may be doing and how we may prevent them from copying us. We spend our time focusing on our own direction and working out how to improve our product. Of course we utilise the legal protections of copyright and trademark laws wherever possible.

## **Do you do your own market research?**

We conduct on-going market research and also utilise external research on what women want from the Web and issues of useability. We also communicate with our members through our fortnightly newsletters, which provides us with another means for conducting research.

## **What about jurisdictional issues? Will you move outside Australia?**

There is a lot of overseas content for women already on the net. TheLounge aims to provide relevant local content and services.

**What sort of terms and conditions does theLounge have?**

We have the equivalent of eight typed pages of terms and conditions dealing with everything from medical disclaimers (for health related articles), terms of sale and return, privacy and security statements, licences to use materials posted to chat rooms and discussion boards, copyright, virus warnings and general limitations of liability.

**What do you enjoy most about the job?**

It is my perfect job because I get to utilise my skills in a new exciting industry, working on a product which I believe in and meeting interesting people.

**What are your hours like?**

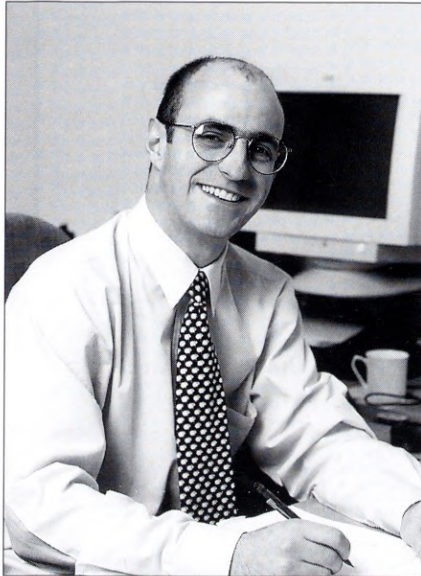
Long!! I'm working most weekends and into the evening most work days, Luckily we have a great team at theLounge which makes work a pleasure.

theLounge web site is located at [www.theLounge.com.au](http://www.theLounge.com.au)

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1 "Cookies" are small pieces of information that are stored by a browser on the computer's hard drive. They have been likened to the notion of a store tattooing a barcode on your forehead, and then laser scanning you every time you come through the doors. (See B Macklin, "Australian Privacy and Security Web site Survey 1999", Internet Law Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 8, October 1999, 103) Cookies are safe and do not contain any personally identifying information, but they do enable users to maintain their shopping bag items for up to 24 hours, so that they can continue shopping at a later stage without losing the items that are currently stored in their shopping bag. Most Web browsers automatically accept cookies, but you can usually change your browser to prevent that.

**chair's report**



**RICHARD KERVIN**

G'day! So where was the Y2k bug then? Like any self-respecting insect it was off hiding under a rock somewhere. Still, the hyperbole preceding 1/1/00 wasn't all bad. After all, what better excuse is there for partying like there's no tomorrow, than the fear that there may actually BE no tomorrow?

**The Year Ahead**

The euphoria of the new millennium may be past\* but the enthusiasm which accompanies the start of each new year should still be with us. We should be optimistic about 2000, although I admit that the year is now not so young; the articulated clerks have started, the heat wave has passed, and I've finished all the cans of baked beans I was hoarding in anticipation of Y2k rioting...

Enthusiasm for the year ahead is being felt throughout the Young Lawyers' Section. As you will read in the Committee Chairs' reports, there are plenty of things planned for 2000. Get involved! Let me mention one initiative in particular – the Young Lawyers' Annual Conference at Hepburn Springs on Saturday 13 May 2000. The conference will have some excellent speakers and the choice of

CLE topics should be relevant to Young Lawyers from all areas of practice. We plan to have a dinner Saturday evening and discounted accommodation will be available for those who wish to make it a weekend away. The Conference will be held in an attractive part of the state, and should be as convenient to those who live outside Melbourne as those from within. I hope to see you there!

**Council Elections**

You will be given the opportunity to express your enthusiasm at the Council elections later this year. The Council is the governing body of the Law Institute of Victoria, comprising 18 members who serve three-year terms and retire by rotation. This year there are six ordinary vacancies, and three created by the retirement of members who cannot fulfil their terms. One of those vacancies was created when Phoebe Dunn, a well-known and active member of the Young Lawyers' Section, retired last year to move interstate. You may recall that Jason Newman, another Young Lawyer, was appointed by the Council to fill her place until the election.

Jason Newman is standing for election to Council this year, as is Aurora Kostezky, joint chair of the Community Issues committee. You may already know Jason and Aurora from their association with this Section. If you don't know them, check out their profiles on pp. 13-14.

The Council elections are in early April; it's a postal ballot – look out for another envelope filled with more paper than most. Do take the time to vote. It's your professional association, so have your say in who will run it. Get involved!

*\* For the purists, take heart – there's less than a year to go until the 21st century!*

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