

Edu-taining the masses ... of children

Emily Morgan

PROBLEM SOLVING

COMPANY: The Lulus.

BUSINESS: Children's educational entertainment.

GROWTH TIPS: Adapt your goals, develop capacity for growth from the outset, build awareness in order to reach goals.

iting the equity and assets, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, as well as a business primed for growth.

"We prepared it right from the word go to be able to be a live show, to be versatile for television, to be Australianised, to fit with peer classification, all those things were considered to give us the optimum output opportunity," Ms Carbone told *WA Business News*.

Since then, she has developed The Lulus brand and has increased the turnover-two fold each year since purchasing the business in 2008.

And her goals have changed as the business has grown.

Initially, Ms Carbone's priority was to get The Lulus on television, but that was soon overtaken by the need to spread awareness of the business.

"The whole aim was to have The Lulus on TV, but what we found was because it is a tough market to get into, they didn't have the timeslots. We were advised to build it up, build up a fan base, awareness, and if we can build it up Australia wide the opportunity to go into TV is much better," she said.

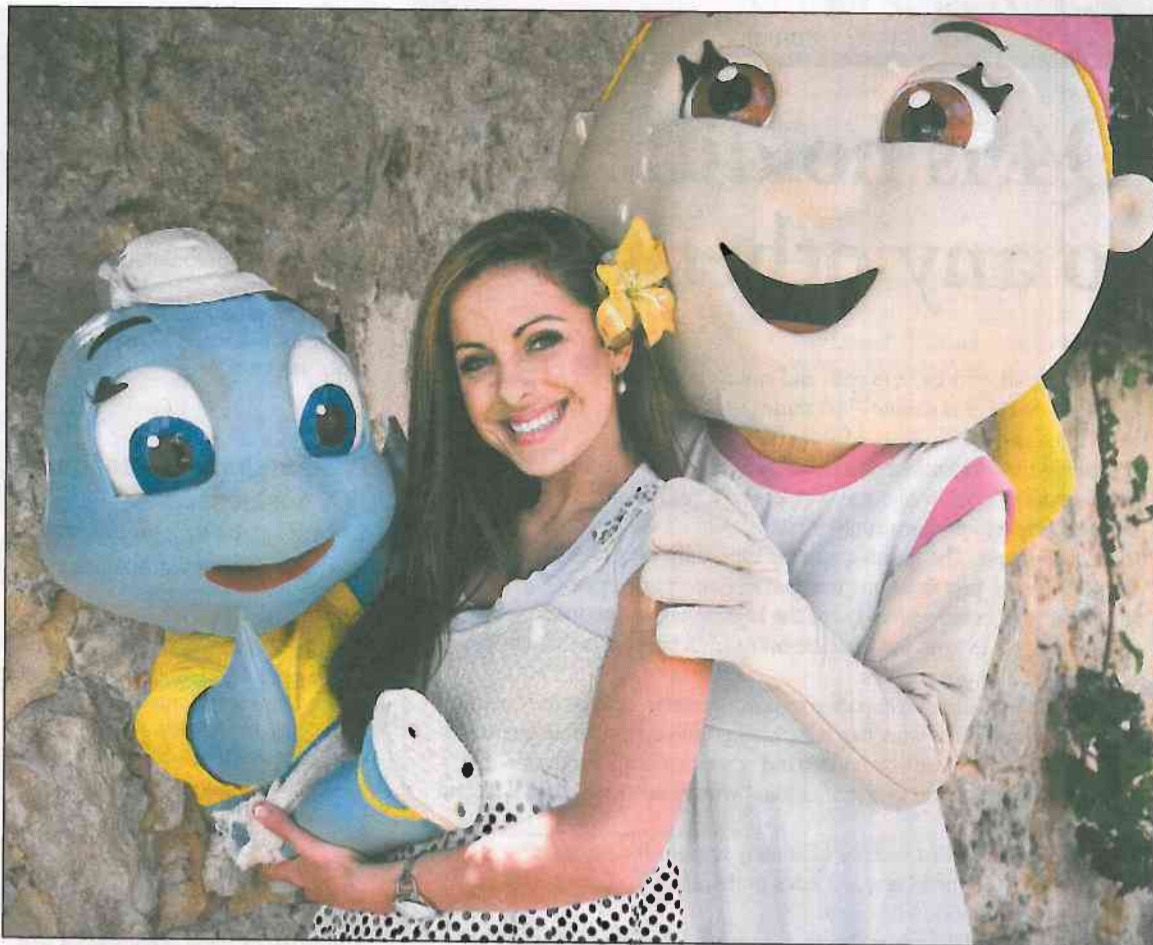
Ms Carbone has set about creating brand awareness through developing different types of performances - from full productions with five characters to smaller shows at children's birthday parties, for example, which has allowed her to reach children in a range of settings.

She said this had made for strong word-of-mouth marketing, with mums and dads spreading The Lulus' message to their extended networks.

There has been a flow-on effect to other markets as well.

During the recent school holidays, Ms Carbone and her team were flown to Newman to perform at a BHP-built playground.

The event was a hit, with mothers and children alike keen for some live, home-grown educational entertainment.



EXPOSURE: Irene Carbone is hoping to continue the strong growth The Lulus have achieved since she bought the business in 2008. Photo: Grant Currall

"They flew me and the whole team up; we stayed two nights and we did this huge show, had big posters all over it, they had a big ad in the paper. It was overwhelming for the kids, they have nothing like that up there," she said.

Soon after that, Ms Carbone was contacted by an event organiser planning Christmas parties in Port Hedland and asked to perform four performances over Christmas next year in the Pilbara town.

"A WA booking company was doing the booking for the Christmas parties up north; they said 'we heard

you were in Newman, there is nothing like you in WA, we have heard great reviews and we want to book you'," Ms Carbone said.

With a growing booking sheet and only one costume for each character available, Ms Carbone is hoping to invest in new costumes, thereby doubling the opportunities for her business.

And she'll need them, with a booking agent in the eastern states calling recently, looking to book a series of performances for their client, Westfield.

Westfield is not the only big name

interested in The Lulus. Last year Ms Carbone set herself a goal of 50 full-scale performances and 150 birthday parties by the end of financial year, which she is achieving by way on contracts with Myer and Ikea.

Winning contracts with the retail giants has been of great marketing value for The Lulus, with both clients investing in advertising in state newspapers on behalf of Ms Carbone.

All of this is building on The Lulus' growing popularity, something that is integral for opening up television opportunities - which remains a goal - alongside tours around Australia.

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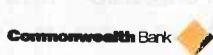
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