

'It's been hard work but it has paid off' Jo Sutton of Auckland

Some people like nothing better than relaxing with a pina colada and trashy novel when they go on holiday.

But not Jo Sutton. The 33-year-old was so obsessed with making her giftware-importing business (www.mollyjay.co.nz) work, that when she took a well-earned break overseas a few years ago, she would sit by her hotel pool on a sun lounger furiously writing down ideas.

"I know that sounds a bit tragic," laughs Jo. "But I couldn't sit still. I ate, slept and drank the business and I knew I had to make it work because it was my only source of income."

Thirteen years ago, Jo was lucky to survive a serious road accident which left her with facial injuries. She's since had 10 reconstructive operations around her forehead and eye area and has lost 30 percent of the vision in one eye.

But this hasn't stopped her from wanting to chase her dreams.

After coming home from her OE four years ago, Jo decided to have a crack at running at her own business.

Having worked in export sales for seven years before going abroad, Jo knew a bit about the import and export industry, and saw no good reason why she couldn't set up her own giftware-importing business.

"I didn't want to come back to New Zealand and get stuck in the corporate grind, working ridiculous hours," says Jo.

"I don't have kids yet but I wanted a career that I could fit around family eventually."

Having seen a particular range of gift products in England that she liked, Jo contacted the company, which was based in Vietnam. They liked Jo's proposal so she set up her business, which she called Molly Jay.

"I went on courses to help me learn about things like e-mail marketing and taxes," says Jo.

"I started it at home and had to learn to do cold-calling and handle the knockbacks."

Jo has since shifted to larger premises and now employs two others.

As well as importing products, Jo also gets involved in the creative side of the business, designing handbags and having a say when it comes to the look of her babywear range.

"It's been hard work but it has paid off and I would do it all again," she says.

Sarah Nealon



Jo's giftware-importing business is a success

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