

# It's a SECRET

MEREDITH WANTED TO ENSURE THAT EVERY WOMAN FELT SHE WAS WORTHY OF OWNING A DIAMOND RING. JANE CHANTHADAVONG DISCOVERS HOW THE SALE OF SIMULATED DIAMONDS CAN HELP DO JUST THAT.

...aying goes 'diamonds are a girl's best friend' ...s often a rare gift to give or receive for the ...day consumer. But this is what managing ...or Jane Meredith and co-founder at the ...of establishment Dietmar Gorlich wanted ...range when they opened their first Secret ...store in Noosa, Queensland back in April ... by selling simulated diamonds. ...thing I noticed was how a woman can be ...ted if they walk into a diamond store. A lot of ...men have said it depends on how you dress ...at will decide whether you're worthy of buying ...diamonds. For me, that goes to show how a lot ...of women would not feel worthy enough to ...go into a diamond store. I thought that was a ...bit of a shame because I feel that all women ...should be treated equal and that was one ...of things that really drove my ...thinking," she says. ..."I wanted to create a shop ...that represented women ...equally and create a product ...that gave every woman an opportunity ...to walk into a store and walk out feeling ...that they've been treated the same ...whether she has a million dollars in her

...technology that is used to create simulated diamonds is ...able to stop the aging process, which was the problem that ...cubic zirconia minerals previously had when they were first ...introduced into the market in the 1970s. As a result, the ...mineral was often associated as a 'cheap' alternative to ...diamonds. ...However Meredith explains that unlike cubic zirconia, ...simulated diamonds no longer age, break down or go milky. ..."It's not referred to as a cubic zirconia in the jewellery ...world anymore because technology is so advance it really ...does simulate a diamond. Now, because of technology and the ...use of different production methods we see it as a great alternative ...to diamonds," she says. ..."We keep the stones in solid gold setting, which is the ...Same as what diamonds are set in. On top of that, these ...stones are cut to the exact portions of a diamond so it's able ...to give that same refractive index and brilliance that a diamond ...can give." ...Sticking to that belief, the company has been able to grow its ...store footprint over the last 11 years to 20 outlets, which is made- ...up of five company-owned stores and 15 franchised stores. There ...are also plans to roll-out another five in the next year in Australia ...with aims to reach a total of 30 to 40 stores in Australia before ...moving into the overseas market. ..."It takes a long time to do all your research and we consolidated ...it over the last two to three years in terms of our direction. Looking



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...to undergo store refurbishments to keep up with the ...changes and demands of its customers. The business recently ...reopened its Chadstone flagship store, featuring its new store fitout ...which includes single floating showcase at the front of the store. ...There is also a seating area to help create an intimate setting for a ...more personalised customer experience. ..."We had the challenge of the dollar dropping and gold price rising ...rapidly so we had to rethink the business. We started to look at what ...stores were performing and weren't, which is what most companies ...have done in the last two years," Meredith says. ..."We thought okay we need to start looking at our stores and while ...that store fitout worked 11 years ago it's very vanilla in the current ...market and it wasn't telling a story nor did it represent the changes ...we thought about for the company." ...At the same time, on top of offering its regular range of ...engagement rings, dress rings, eternity bands, Secrets Shhh has ...expanded its product range with seasonal ranges. ..."We started to realise we weren't offering anything new or ...fashionable so twice a year now we have season injections of ...spring and summer ranges of sterling silver. They're not as expensive ...and more fashion orientated so we're hitting the market with all the

...Often they'll have the baby, get a house and get married or ...they get house, get married and have a baby. There's ...still a traditional movement but there's also a non- ...traditional movement so we want to appeal to ...both groups. ..."The brand now stands a little bit taller, a little ...bit more confident and obviously we are talking ...about worthiness and confidence in women then ...the brand has to stand for that as well. We find ...that with the new look and feel it certainly stands ...very strong and tall." ...But according to Meredith, the most rewarding part of ...the business has been creating a retail environment ...that is able to breakdown social barriers. ..."The loveliest thing for me was to see ...this very wealthy, well-dressed woman ...buying a nice ring for herself and ...a young couple around 20-years- ...old choosing an engagement ...ring speaking to each other in ...the store. Normally in a jewellery ...store those two people wouldn't talk ...to each other because there'd be massive ...disconnect for different reasons, they'd probably wouldn't even be in ...the same store and what was lovely was that she got involved with ...them and assisted them," she says.