

Would the gentlemen investors please not look away

Dr Joanne Morgan has taken her invention – the backless, strapless bra for ladies of generous proportions – from prototype to a marketable reality, but she's had to leave the East Midlands to do it. All this and a new baby boy this year, Network talks to the mother of invention.

front and personal



IT'S an undoubted success: less than four years after its invention the Faveo Freedom Bra is in the stores in the UK and Australia. And with the average UK bosom now heaving at a stays-snapping 34E, it's the only product of its kind for most women to wear under an evening dress – it has obvious market appeal.

Inventor Joanne Morgan is very intelligent to say the least – she holds a BSc in Biology at the University of Birmingham; a Masters in Oncology and a PhD in Biomedical Sciences at The University of Nottingham, and has worked with clinicians and scientists from the NHS and different universities on health-related inventions; patenting and developing intellectual property-based businesses backed by venture capital. And she's a 34F if you really must know.

After winning Handbag.com/Barclays Bank most Innovative Business Plan of 2005, you'd have thought it would be plain sailing – but it's not so.

Joanne told In Business: "You not only need to know your product very well – you need to know everything. The most difficult areas are intellectual property and private investment, which I have experience in.

"You can't pay people to do it for you. I think anyone starting out would find it almost impossible. With a new product, investors want to see how it works and what it looks like – you need money to make the prototype but where is that going to come from? "Because we needed to research the markets, we needed private investment to start off. We first went to friends and family at the very, very early stages.

Without a working prototype we had nothing to sell or show to anybody." To keep overheads down, Joanne worked from home. Because the bra was based on a new concept – differential compression rather than the traditional cantilever support – it works unlike anything else so she had to research how the idea worked, the materials, the limitations and capabilities. That meant using live models – again family and friends had to sacrifice themselves.

But Joanne says the most



Looking perfect...

disappointing aspect was the Government grant scheme. "The really only one type of grant that research and development and a major pitfall is you have to get a grant, which is at most only 50% project," she says.

Where the money is

"You have to go through all the process to get the grant and then have to get the private investment. If you are in a region like the East Midlands, which is poor, there is one to match the grants – it's why the private money is that matter. That's why the business had to move to the West Midlands (Tamworth Staffordshire).

"It's been very stressful and it took almost a year to raise the money. There is no straightforward mechanism to get Government with an invention.

"Investors put their money into they're interested in and private investors are mainly men. I really didn't have to prove my product to the 'Dragons', it was their wife making the decision, and consumers are not the best people to judge commercial potential of a product – it's the retailers who have the understanding of what will sell why.

"If you take your idea to a manufacturer they won't buy in

...from every angle



because it's not on the market and is therefore not a threat. Industry is not interested in anything other than what it already makes." It has taken around £500,000 from 30 or so investors to get the product to its present stage, and Joanne talks of how she's starting a completely new phase - how to sell. Her website is attracting 15,000 hits per day but she says it takes a long time to convince people. In spite of the difficulties, Joanne

remains loyal to our region. Though final assembly of the bra takes place in Morocco, the materials are sourced from the East Midlands. She says: "I'm a member of DNCC because the East Midlands is a fantastic place to be in - all the world looks to the East Midlands as the best place for quality textiles. It's the heritage of the Nottingham lace industry. Did you know DeMontfort is the only place where they teach bra design?"

The bra's the star



Developed with lingerie designer Megan Powell-Vreeswijk, the Faveo Freedom Bra heralds a totally new method of breast support: differential compression. The invention came out of Joanne Morgan's frustration at not being able to find any bra that would support her 34F bust in a backless dress. She said: "Such a product was not scientifically possible for someone of my size so I decided to develop something completely novel and made the first prototype. With this, I demonstrated that the conventional theory about breast support (the cantilever method) is not the only way that breasts can be supported, and I filed patents worldwide. "I found that creating differential compression around each breast is actually much better suited to larger breast sizes." "Megan then took the concept and turned it into what it is today."

'Differential compression' works through a band that wraps around each breast individually. The band moulds the breast into shape by applying pressure at different points around the circumference of the base of the breast. The bra has a carefully designed band that is held in place with a unique sticky silicone and is wider at the bottom and around the sides. The band very gently compresses the soft breast tissue at the bottom of the breast more in relation to the top, to create a net upward force and uplift. Pressure is also applied to the sides of each breast, producing gentle moulding forces to create a firmer and more youthfully rounded shape. The bra fastens with a familiar, adjustable hook and eye for those women with one breast larger than the other, and has an outer layer of stretch Lycra to ensure an ultra-smooth contour.

How to Stand Out Above the Crowd And Get All The Business You Deserve

**How do you assess people when you first meet them?
What makes you take notice of someone?
What do others notice about you?**

Like it or not, you are evaluated within seven seconds of any new encounter. You are appraised on your visual appearance, your behaviour, your demeanour, your mannerisms, and your body language.

You need to get this right or you may as well not turn up.

A few seconds is all you get to make a good first impression - communicate who you are and what you are about. The assumptions and judgements about you in the initial seconds of your first meeting form a lasting impression that takes time to recover from an ineffective first impression; you don't always get a second chance.

The truth is that if you and your representatives don't look and act the part, you're missing out on sales, opportunities and INCOME that could have been yours.

How you come across initially has little to do with what you are or how good your product is, people buy you before they buy your product.

Creating a great first impression that your customers want to buy into is not just about looking right, although that does have an impact; it's also about how you're feeling, your state of mind, and the signals that you are unaware of.

Our 07 Seconds training programme will make a difference to the way you are perceived and will open doors that were previously firmly shut.

Benefits of our training:

- quality meetings with quality outcomes,
- exceptional communication skills putting you above your competitors,
- improved sales success - more income,
- successful interviews,
- superior networking flair,
- desirable client base, and...

who