

The business end

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42 **Keep it in the family**
Family businesses face challenges

43 **Jeanne-Vida Douglas**
Divine non-intervention

44 **Neil Shoebridge**
David Jones goes online again

44 **Pie Facebook**
Using social networks effectively

45 **Management update**

Emerging companies

46 **Juiced up and ready to go**
Berry big interest in health product

The list

47 **Financial planners**
Plus five questions to ask them

Professions

48 **Name of the game**
Law firms embrace sponsorships

49 **Moore manoeuvres**
Accountants jockey for position

Lifecycle

50 **Flexibility**
Deryll, Nene Brown, Kallico Catering

51 **Adventure**
Earl de Blonville

Property

52 **Real help to sell**
Vendor advocates help get top dollar

Investment

54 **Offshore opportunities**
Pick the best places for your money



Long, hard road: Angela and Con Vithoukas have been working together for 26 years

RELATIONSHIPS

KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

Rules for managing relationships and expectations are crucial for business success, but a remarkable 86 per cent have not even taken this basic step. **Report: Jane Lindhe**

● Blood may be thicker than water but it takes a lot more than genetics to make a family business work.

The co-owner of Sydney cafe and catering business VIVO Café, Angela Vithoukas, says family business is not for the faint-hearted and can sometimes be ruthless.

There's the fighting and disagreements that often end in tears, then there are the business decisions that need to be made on a daily basis, irrespective of the state of personal relationships, she says.

"People are deluded if they think that they won't get any fireworks. Think of the worst thing that could happen because at some stage it will," Vithoukas, who has been in business with her brother Con for 26 years, says.

"Everything about family business is difficult – especially working with a sibling where you have all the tensions of

being brother and sister and then the added pressures of running a business."

Vithoukas' view of the reality of running a family business is spot-on, the MGI Australian Family and Private Business Survey shows.

The survey, conducted jointly with RMIT University, found that two-thirds of family businesses struggled with managing business connections on top of personal relationships. Managing communication between family members and leadership struggles were also top concerns.

But despite the threat to personal and business lives, 86 per cent of family businesses have not implemented rules to manage relationships or set out their expectations for each involved family member, MGI's survey found. Communication is also lacking between directors in family businesses.

Seventy-two per cent do not hold regular family meetings and 82 per cent have no policies to deal with predictable issues specific to family businesses.

For the Vithoukases, family business was bred into their DNA and managing a system for working together came later.

One of Vithoukas' first experiences of family businesses was chasing would-be teenage thieves out of her Greek migrant parent's mixed business with a broom at the age of four.



Business decisions need to be made on a daily basis, irrespective of the state of your personal relationships

Angela Vithoukas

