

DECEMBER 2019

PROFILE

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 126



THREE BIRDS FLYING HIGH

ABUNDANCE | STYLE | EASE | GRACE



THREE birds

WORDS GENINE HOWARD

FEARLESS FEMININE FOUNDERS

THREE birds



IF YOU ARE ANYTHING LIKE ME, YOU HAVE BEEN FAN-GIRLING ALL OVER 'BONNIE, LANA AND ERIN' WHO HEAD UP AUSTRALIAN RENOVATION MULTI-MEDIA BRAND, **THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS**. AND IF YOU HAVE BEEN FAN-GIRLING YOU WILL KNOW YOUR WHITE ON WHITE FROM YOUR LEXICON QUARTER AND YOUR WALL SCONCE FROM YOUR PENDANT. IF YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I AM GOING ON ABOUT THEN YOU ARE IN FOR A

ERIN, LANA AND BONNIE

Best friends and busy mums, Bonnie, Lana and Erin, make up the faces of this to-die-for renovation brand and education company that has become an online success in just five short years. With a Youtube show, massive online following, online courses, live appearances and celebrity-like following, these three down-to-earth mums have landed on a magical formula: Renovation, Realness and Reality TV all rolled into one. Meeting with Lana, the marketing genius of the company, is like having a chardy with your bestie. She's straight to the point, quick to laugh and happy to share all the gritty details of behind the scenes. And we both agree it's best to pin down only one of the 'birds' as an interview with all three strong personalities may be an interviewer's worst nightmare! The trio has been best friends for coming up to 20 years, and against most people's advice, in 2014 the mums quit their respective corporate careers and joined forces to start flipping houses. Lana says, "When our youngest kids had gone off to kindergarten we were kind of like at that point where you look to reclaim who you are as a woman before you had kids. So we all hit that stage at the same time, and all felt as if we weren't going to get job satisfaction in our current jobs.



"For me, that was the world of corporate fast-moving consumer goods. For Bonnie and Erin, they job shared in event management at a football club. Bonnie rang me one day and said, 'Hey, do you want to start renovating houses with me? And I said, look, I have no renovating experience but count me in! We just got together, and from there, we decided that we would buy a property and flip it," Lana explains matter-of-factly. From there the girls bought, renovated and sold their first property, earning themselves a wage and a common goal. Intending to keep friends and family up-to-date on their projects, the Three Birds started an Instagram account. What became apparent was that people loved what they were doing, and the following quickly grew. Lana says, "We just heard from so many people who started following us, and mums at the school. They would say, 'Oh my god, you guys are living the dream! You are best friends renovating houses; you are your own bosses. This is the Australian dream!' I had to ring the girls [Bonnie and Erin] and tell them we were apparently living the dream!" she laughs.

WE HAD NO BUSINESS PLAN... LIKE NOTHING WRITTEN DOWN. BUT I FELT COMFORTABLE WITH IT."

– LANA, THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS

"Where it's now ended up is from flipping homes, to documenting and sharing our renovations. And now we see ourselves in the space of inspiring and educating women like us on how to get their dream home. So it's all about helping you renovate your home and getting the results you want. Because we've made lots of mistakes, we still make mistakes. And if you're renovating, it could be your first and last renovation in your lifetime. So we're here to help you."

From the outside looking in, the girls have got it going on; however, when they started, they intended only to flip one house and see where it took them.

Lana admits; "We had no business plan, even though, I studied business at uni! And it's sort of weird to start a small business with no business plan, like nothing written down. But I felt comfortable with it. "Because when we started, we knew nothing, other than Bonnie's experience growing up with a renovating family. But together, as a team, we didn't even know if we were any good. How can you write a robust business plan that's meaningful when you don't know what you don't know?"



WITH A REACH NOW OF OVER TWO MILLION WOMEN, THE GIRLS ARE HAVING SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS ON THEIR FANS. “WHEN WE MEET PEOPLE IN REAL LIFE, THEY HAVE SO MANY STORIES OF ‘I COPIED THIS FROM YOU’ AND ‘I DID THAT’ OR ‘YOU GAVE ME CONFIDENCE TO TELL A TRADESPERSON THAT’S NOT WHAT I WANT’.”

– LANA, THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS

So we just went in with a level of investment that we felt comfortable with and we knew that with property in the Sydney market back then you couldn't really stuff it up.”

Lana reflects on their start up that she felt she had left her marketing skills ‘in the toilet’ because now she was just a renovator. She says, “But all of a sudden this little beautiful brand started to grow and I started to feel at home and like I've got something to do. It's just a beautiful product where Three Birds has ended up and is the absolute ultimate brand I could ever want to work on in my life. And I happened to be a co-founder with Bonnie and Erin.”

Now with more than 100,000 Facebook likes, 100,000 subscribers on Youtube and a whopping 475,000 followers on Instagram the ‘birds’ pride themselves on ‘keeping it real’. Lana says, “We know we've got a large following we know we've got a solid influence and we take that really seriously. But we are literally the mums next door. We can swear like a

trooper at times and have a chaotic life and have all the same issues that everyone else does.”

With a reach now of over two million women, the girls are having significant impacts on their fans. Lana says, “When we meet people in real life, they have so many stories of ‘I copied this from you’ and ‘I did that’ or ‘you gave me confidence to tell a tradesperson that's not what I want’. Our audience want more from us so that just started to push us in a direction where we had to strategically work out how do we give them the content they want.”

With a rapid organic growth, the company started to outgrow three women ‘winging it’. Today, Three Birds Renovations employs a team of 12 including a CEO. “Candice Fernandez, our CEO is amazing. She keeps it all together. We wouldn't have survived this long without a CEO. Two years ago, we brought her in and she is just the best because we're three equal co-founders and we needed a boss,” Lana admits.



“But all of a sudden this little beautiful brand started to grow and I started to feel at home and like I’ve got something to do. It’s just a beautiful product where Three Birds has ended up and is the absolute ultimate brand I could ever want to work on in my life. And I happened to be a co-founder with Bonnie and Erin.”
– LANA, THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS

BONNIE, ERIN AND LANA



“If we kept it with the three of us, we were going to burn ourselves out. We were probably going to run ourselves into the ground. We were not going to produce great results because we were going to be pulled from pillar to post. Whereas now we can have some people help run around so we can focus on the content creation, which is what our audience is asking for and what our purpose is - to help others - and we can't deliver on our brand purpose and our company purpose alone,” Lana divulges.

She says, “If it was just the three of us, it would have killed us. Why would we want to have created our own business and then not enjoy it?”

I ask Lana to talk about what it's like working with your best friends. Surely it could be a recipe for disaster? Lana admits, “Well, you know, when we first started out, we didn't have any specific roles. We were just the three of us doing all the same work. But very quickly we

realised Bonnie's our designer - I didn't even know she was any good, honestly! But she's fabulous! She has it in her veins, in her blood, in her family. It's her.

“And Erin is a natural project manager. She loves a spreadsheet. Not many people do, certainly not Bonnie! Erin's great at dealing with trades people, getting them there [on site] on time. She loves managing a budget.”

She continues about her own place in the company; “And so when we started out, I really had no role. I was twiddling my thumbs but then my marketing side started to come in handy. So now we really stick to our lanes. Bonnie does all the design work, Erin makes the renovation happen. And I make sure we are sharing it in the way our audience wants it.”

I ask Lana to divulge further about their working relationship. Surely there are times when friendships get strained?

"If we kept it with the three of us, we were going to burn ourselves out. We were probably going to run ourselves into the ground. We were not going to produce great results because we were going to be pulled from pillar to post."

— LANA, THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS



**"IT IS A COMPLETE MIXTURE OF ART AND SCIENCE
AND ORGANIC ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIC
PLANNING. AND IT'S A BEAST!"**

– LANA, THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS

Lana says, "We realise we're all different people. I think each of us has a pretty thick skin - it's like we're sisters. And we can usually be pretty honest with each other. We can say anything to each other and make jokes about each other. It's how we roll. That's true friendship."

The company is now a well-oiled, somewhat chaotic machine with multiple projects on the go at any time. Lana says, "We have a pretty long plan of what houses we're doing, when and what type of styles we're going to be showcasing. And we're always working on our education platforms, which is our online Reno School (www.therenoschool.com). We are thinking very hard about what the evolution of The Reno School is, what other knowledge gaps there are with our audience. So it is a complete mixture of art and science and organic activities and strategic planning. And it's a beast!"

Lana explains, "We often have a few projects on the go all at once, and they're all at different stages. So we can be designing a future project in the morning. Then we can go and film the framework going up at another project in the middle of the day. And then in the afternoon, go to a photo shoot at a project we've just finished. And then we're releasing an episode that night."

Lana is the first to admit that business is 'not all daisies, rainbows and unicorns'. Their business is really hard work. However the girls wouldn't have it any other way. Lana says, "But at least we're working for ourselves. We work on our own terms, and we work harder than we ever have before. But we still make school pickup if we need to. We can do those things. I work from home a lot and that suits me to a tee. And so I'm very lucky in what we've built."



I ask about where Lana sees the company heading. She says, “We’re satisfied... but we certainly haven’t explored our full potential. I don’t know exactly where it’s going to go. I don’t fear failure but I fear us not trying and not fulfilling our potential. I just want to know we have maxed it out. And I know we haven’t. Because we still have so many ideas that we haven’t shared with anybody.

“I just know, we are on the right path.” With their eleventh project just revealed - a to-die-for ‘Colour Me Hamptons’ project along with project 12 in progress with projects 13 and 14 in the pipeline, I can certainly say these three busy mums and business owners are flying high. P

PROFILE TV PRESENTS:

Fierce Feminine Founders

with THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS

HOSTED BY GENINE HOWARD