



# On being **FRANK**

Two female entrepreneurs are building a business around equipping young people with the business and life skills to succeed.

By **Domini Stuart**

**JESSICA SIMPSON** – fake. Paris Hilton – fake. The Olsen twins – fake. To be frank, it's hardly the spin you'd expect from a girls' magazine. But that's just what being *Frank* is all about.

*Frank* magazine may catch the eye like *Dolly* or *Girlfriend*, but a quick glance inside belies any other similarity. To quote editor Karen Miles, the online publication is ad-free, diet-free and stupid-free.

As a freelance journalist, Miles worked for women's magazines until she could no longer stand the mixed messages they were sending out to their readers. She dreamed of creating a magazine for young women filled with positive, genuine information about living a happy and healthy life.

"I spent literally years trying to convince advertisers, potential partners and publishers that my idea was financially viable," she says. "In the end, I decided I just couldn't wait any longer for my 'cash cow with a heart' to appear."

In August 2003, Karen called a journalist friend who was also passionate about how women were represented and 'talked at' in the media. Together they decided to take a different tack – to create a free, online magazine using a team of volunteers.

The 11th issue of *Frank* is now available and there's not a compromise in sight. Almost two years on, it is continuing

to provide young women with valuable and independent information to help them make their own informed choices about their career, relationships, personal growth and the environment. It looks fabulous. And it never overlooks the importance of fun stuff like entertainment and fashion.

"Of course, we'd love to see *Frank* on the news stands," says Miles. "We're still on the look out for a partner who shares our vision and has the resources to make that happen. But, in the meantime, word of mouth means thousands of girls are reading – more at every issue."

## **Natural-born entrepreneurs**

Jessica Kiely, one of the long-term volunteers on *Frank* magazine, is also Miles' business partner. Their company, originally named Youth2Youth, is now known as The Frank Team.

Miles started her own business at 23, has written the best-selling *'Career Advice you wish your mum had told you'* and is a member of the National Businesswoman's Network. Kiely had her own business at the age of 19, now runs two successful companies and was a 2005 NSW Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year Finalist.

As natural-born entrepreneurs, they both believe that the traditional subjects taught in schools are important, but they leave many young people lacking the real skills they need to succeed.

"People no longer have a career path carved out for them when they leave school," says Miles. "Meaningful work is hard to find, and there's just no such thing as a job for life anymore. Today, young people also need to be taught how to think like entrepreneurs so they can create their own inspiring businesses and community projects, and be more enterprising within their careers and society."

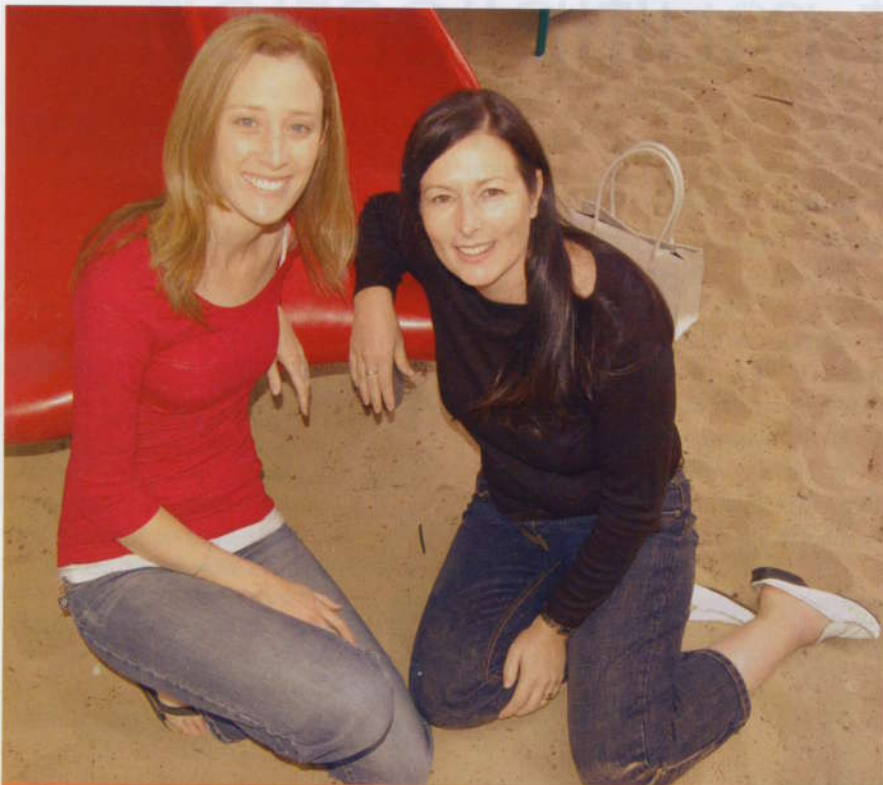
## **An ethical business**

United by a shared vision, Kiely and Miles both describe themselves as social entrepreneurs, "We care more about the difference our business and our work makes in the world than amassing money," says Kiely. "We actually care about our impact on people and our environment, and make our decisions based on our values and running a sustainable, ethical business."

However, they came to the partnership by very different paths.

In January 2001, Kiely was working as a volunteer for her local council when her team was asked to run an event for National Youth Week. "I realised then that there were lots of young people running events without event management or promotions experience – so I wrote the training program," says Kiely.

In March 2001, she piloted two youth skills workshops – one on event management, the other on PR skills – ▶



The Frank team, editor Karen Miles with business partner, Jessica Kiely.

for delegates at the Youth Action & Policy Association state conference. She knew from her own experience that youth-friendly support and networking for young entrepreneurs simply didn't exist. The response to her workshops then confirmed her suspicion that there was also little or no youth-specific training. When it clicked that the critical factors in her success were her own youth and hands-on experience, Youth2Youth was born.

Meanwhile, Miles was taking a more circuitous route. "I started out thinking that success meant success in the corporate world, with a suit and a briefcase," she says. "I got a job with a good PR consultancy, but I was working crazy hours and I had no choice as to the products and services I worked on. I wasn't happy. To my parents' horror, I quit my job and went overseas for a while.

"Part of my job had been writing media releases. When one of them was published word for word under someone else's name I was frustrated – but I also

realised I must be able to write. That was when I launched my career as a freelance journalist."

Miles joined Kiely in 2003 to pioneer an area known as enterprise education. "It's all about equipping young people to identify, create and manage opportunities for their lives, career, and community," says Miles. "Youth2Youth helps them develop the skills they need to take initiative and make things happen."

### The appeal of a peer

Youth2Youth is now a respected, nationwide training organisation. Using ready-to-go or specially tailored workshops and programs, an expanded team of facilitators informs and inspires young people in schools, universities, local councils, corporates and youth organisations as diverse as the Department for Family and Community Services (DOCS), Questacon, Westpac, The Spastic Centre and the Commonwealth Bank Foundation.

"What makes our workshops unique is that we've all been there," says Miles. "Every one of our facilitators is a young entrepreneur walking the talk.

"The youngest, Callan Taylor, is a former national road cycling champion who now runs his own graphic design company – and he's just 19.

"Our work is based on first-hand knowledge and experience of running businesses and initiating enterprising activity," Miles continues. "We're not preaching from text books, and people find that refreshing."

It was the breadth of their success that prompted the name change.

"We now have Gen X & Y programs successfully rolling out across Australia," says Miles. "These are designed for corporates and organisations who want to motivate, develop and retain employees aged from 16 to 35. We have also found that teachers, careers advisers, managers and youth workers enjoy our workshops, and we're being asked to put them on specifically for grown-ups."

The Youth2Youth positioning was no longer working for the spectrum of clients.

"While the Youth2Youth programs remain intact, we've changed the name of the overall company to The Frank Group. The concept of being honest, open and to the point that worked so well for the magazine was also a true reflection of our attitude to the business."

While the name may acknowledge the more mature, Miles is quick to point out that this doesn't mean the business has become more serious.

"We deliberately use the term 'grown-up' rather than 'adult' to underline the fact that we like to have fun," she says. "Being playful helps people to break out of their rigid thinking, whatever their age."

**Frank's website can be seen at [www.youth2youth.com.au/frank.asp](http://www.youth2youth.com.au/frank.asp)**

If you know of other businesses that are making positive contributions to the community, please email the contact details to [mybusinesseditor@halledit.com.au](mailto:mybusinesseditor@halledit.com.au)