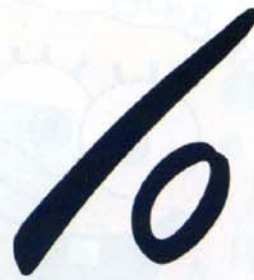




Growing from zero

Driven by David and Sue Brennan, Melbourne's Divisible By Zero continues to introduce an interesting assortment of fun and education products to meet retailers needs.



The Divisible By Zero logo representing the company's distinct individuality.

With David Brennan as managing director and Sue Brennan general manager, Divisible By Zero (DBZ) began operating as a 'single product' company in 1998. "It wasn't our original intention to enter into the toy market as a distributor," explains Sue Brennan, "however we sort of fell on a product that we believed the market deserved".

Bioviva

The product the Brennans 'fell on' is the now very popular trivia board game, Bioviva. The game contains over 900 science and nature-related questions and is played on a map of the world. Last September DBZ released a new version of Bioviva called *My First 3 Nature Games*, the concept for which being a twist on classic games like dominoes and memory cards.

Looking back Sue Brennan describes the early DBZ days as a time of fast-track learning about the toy industry, especially the marketing of products. In the beginning Sue Brennan admits naivete did raise its head.

"We believed so strongly in it [Bioviva] we naively thought it would sell itself," recalls Sue, explaining that it was Bioviva that took the Brennans into the sink or swim world of distribution and retail.

Fortunately for the husband and wife team they knew how to 'swim' in a competitive market, especially if some members of the toy industry kindly threw the newcomers the occasional life preserver in the form of good marketing advice.

Without mentioning names Sue Brennan explains that "we have been fortunate enough to have several members of the industry act as mentors, to them we are incredibly grateful." She adds that right from the early days of Bioviva a selection of independent retailers didn't need too much persuading to stock the clever board game. "We are grateful to those who had faith in our product and us, and gave us a chance," Sue underlines.

David and Sue point out that although they have only had a handful of years as distributors, they have had a long association with the toy industry from a consumer

prospective, as parents of three children.

Also, Sue Brennan has a background in early childhood education at ground level and as a lecturer. The Brennans believe in offering products that both satisfy children with the basic requirement of being entertaining while also fulfilling an educational need.

In contrast to Sue's background, David's background is in general management in the finance industry as well as having an expertise in IT. He still does the occasional consulting assignment for various corporations.

Sue believes the toy industry is like any industry. "The toy industry has its unique features and grasping these has been a challenge," she says. It is with the help of specialised industry advisors, mentors and a lot of hard work that DBZ has evolved from a business that promotes a product to a com-

pany that has a lot to offer in products and service. Today DBZ has a staff of six.

in adult and junior versions. From India there is Children's Chess from Creative Educational Aids and from Australia there is the Plato range of puzzles.

DBZ manufactures its own range of tyre swings in the shape of various animals. The swings are made from recycled car tyres and include horse, elephant and kangaroo designs.

Sue Brennan says to ensure that all new products meet DBZ standard, each item is 'road and market tested' by children before being added to the DBZ inventory.

And while new products are introduced on a regular basis the DBZ customer base also continues to grow. DBZ customers are able to access product information from traditional paper catalogues, a CD-ROM or online via the internet. Customers are also able to order via phone, mail, email, fax, and an agent or online.

Keeping customers satisfied

Sue Brennan explains that although it is DBZ's main objective to get products shipped out to retailers on time there have been occasions when shipping deadlines have fallen back by a couple of days. This she says is a concern to DBZ but not to her retail customers. "We have found it interesting that while we apologise to customers when we cannot get orders shipped within days, they express surprise [because] they are used to having to wait weeks [for products] from some suppliers," she says.

"We believe that this flexibility and responsiveness has helped us find a niche in the marketplace in supplying the smaller retailers who cannot always afford to stock full carton lots [but] are able to order frequently in smaller quantities and still be assured supply. "To keep customers up to date on company news, products and monthly specials DBZ produces a quarterly newsletter."

DBZ is currently looking at a range of new products for 2003 although the Brennans remain tight-lipped about details, although much may be revealed at this year's gift and toy fairs.



David and Sue Brennan: find a niche in the marketplace by supplying smaller retailer stores.

pany that has a lot to offer in products and service. Today DBZ has a staff of six.

Across the market

David and Sue continue to look for new products of a fun and educational nature. They have created a wide cross-section of products covering all areas of the market from the budget to premium end.

"Our current range includes over 200 products from several manufacturers," Sue says. "Some are from within Australia, some from overseas. We find Canada a good source of products that seem to match Australian needs. We also manufacture products ourselves."

A popular product from Canada is the WordXchange game by ProdiJeux available