



THE BUSINESS OF BEING THE



SUPERMODEL, ENTREPRENEUR, WELLNESS GURU: ELLE MACPHERSON IS THE ULTIMATE CAREER SHIFTER. WITH OVER 27 YEARS' INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE TO HER NAME, SHE SHARES HER HARD-EARNED WISDOM WITH KIM PARKER »

Photography NICK LEARY

“It doesn't sound very sexy, does it?” laughs Elle Macpherson down the phone from Miami. “I mean, selling green powder and making it sound covetable seems like a tall order, so you've got to be 100% committed to making it work.” Well, if anyone can make green powder sound sexy, it's Macpherson, one of the original '90s Supers and the woman who earned (then shrewdly trademarked) her nickname “The Body” in the early '90s after a record five appearances on the cover of US magazine *Sports Illustrated*; the woman who has accumulated a fortune from her namesake lingerie line (more of which later) and who, at 53, still looks as fit, lithe and glowy as she did as a teenager when she walked the runways alongside Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington. I'm chatting to Macpherson from my desk in chilly London (meanwhile, she's just back from a bike ride in the Florida sunshine) about the serious business of beauty and the success of WelleCo, the company dedicated to “beauty from within” that she founded four years ago with fellow Australian entrepreneur and ex-magazine editor Andrea Horwood. Here, she talks about what it takes to build a brilliant business, supermodel-style...

the various supplements I was using and created this 'one-stop shop' formula for me, which went on to become the basis of The Super Elixir Super Greens. I started taking it and tweaking my lifestyle and, in a couple of weeks, my skin was dewy and plump, and it wasn't from creams or fillers or Botox or even exercise,” she says. Ever the entrepreneur, the supermodel saw an incredible business opportunity. “My business partner and I could see this shift happening in people's lifestyles. Wellness and beauty were becoming intertwined so we started WelleCo to bridge the two concepts,” she says.

They were right on the money. The Super Elixir is one of a new breed of “nutri-cosmetics” that purport to give you increased energy and a supermodel-worthy glow from within, and are a rapidly growing offshoot of the booming wellness industry. Indeed, current projections suggest nutri-cosmetics will be worth a staggering \$7.4 billion by 2020. These super powders and skin drinks are now stocked alongside premium anti-ageing moisturisers and serums by the likes of Net-a-Porter and Selfridges. The Super Elixir has sold out several times since launching on Net-a-Porter four years ago (even priced at £62 for a month's supply, £96 with a refillable jar) and is now one of several WelleCo products, including plant-based protein powders,

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TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

It all started with that green powder, a blend of super greens, kelp, Chinese mushrooms, turmeric, probiotics and barley grass (among other things) that Macpherson developed with Harley Street nutritionist Dr Simone Laubscher a few years ago. “I was shooting and producing Britain and Ireland's *Next Top Model* and also an American TV show called *Fashion Star* so I was back and forth between LA and the UK. I had both my boys in school [sons Arpad Flynn Alexander, 19, and Aurelius Cy Andrea, 14, from her relationship with French financier Arpad Busson] and was also working for my lingerie business, and I just felt so tired and run-down,” Macpherson says. “No matter how many facials I had or how many different multivitamins I took to try and feel fine, I wasn't fine. My skin and hair were dull and I was putting on weight.” A journalist Macpherson met at the time recommended she visit Dr Laubscher. “The first thing she did was take me off all

relaxing teas and branded merch, such as water bottles and baseball caps. “The key to any good business is a very simple concept – create something that you wish existed, but doesn't yet,” Macpherson says. “With The Super Elixir, I found something great that I'd been searching for and I wanted to do something with it. It was the same with my lingerie. I wanted to find French-style lingerie with a sporty, American fit but it didn't exist. I had to create it.”

FORGE YOUR OWN PATH

So on to that famous lingerie. Back in 1990, when supermodel collaborations weren't yet a thing, Macpherson signed a 25-year licensing deal with the Bendon group to launch Elle Macpherson Intimates, the ultra-feminine range of underwear that went on to become the number one lingerie range in the UK and in her native Australia for years. Then, in 2014, when the time came to renew >>





“YOU’VE GOT TO COMMIT TO TAKING THE LEAP. CONFIDENCE COMES LATER”

her licensing deal, Macpherson shocked the business world by walking away from Bendon and partnering with Australian entrepreneurs Solomon Lew and Simon De Winter on another lingerie range, the sportier-looking Elle Macpherson Body line, which launched in 2016. “It was a pretty ballsy move for me to go from the security of having that licence and just being the ‘face’ of the brand, to becoming a co-founder and 50% shareholder. The risk becomes yours. But sometimes you’ve got to commit to taking that leap and often the confidence comes later. I thought, ‘If I look back on my career, will I regret not having done things my way, if I’d had the choice?’ We’re two years down the road and we’re already in Selfridges, Debenhams and House of Fraser, and doing well,” she says. It’s this kind of steely determination and keen business nous that’s served Macpherson well, netting her a clutch of entrepreneurial awards over the years (as well as millions in the bank) and helping her shape a seriously impressive portfolio career. In one recent #TBT shot from her Instagram account, she’s smiling alongside Claudia Schiffer and Naomi Campbell at the opening of the Fashion Café in the mid ’90s, and she’s written the caption: “We all knew we had to diversify in order to survive.” Did she really know back in her early twenties, I ask her, that she needed to become a brand? “I left my first year at law

school to start modelling but, even then, I knew it was a short-lived business. It’s frustrating to have to wait for opportunities to find you, so I started to generate my own ideas. And it was great for my self-esteem to be more involved with each project.” Macpherson began with art directing shoots alongside her then husband, fashion photographer Gilles Bensimon, and producing her own calendars (with accompanying “making of” documentaries), before the lingerie deal came along. Did she ever have moments when she thought she might fail? “When I was younger, I quite often worried about getting things right on shoots,” she says. “I can still see the tension in my face in some pictures. And now, I still have the odd sleepless night. You do when it’s your own business. We recently had a factory fire and were worried that stock wouldn’t arrive in stores in time,” she says, adding, “but we’ve got to appreciate all the steps we’ve taken because otherwise, we wouldn’t be where we are.”

PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

It turns out Macpherson’s really good at these inspiring nuggets of wisdom. Another is, “Focus on the problem and the problem gets bigger. But focus on the solution and the solution gets bigger.” So when it comes to seeking advice, where does Macpherson turn for inspiration?

Red woman



“I love reading autobiographies. Tamara Mellon’s book *In My Shoes* has good insights into what happens when you sell your business. I also love *Option B* by Sheryl Sandberg, all about resilience. And I’ve always found Diane von Furstenberg fascinating. There are parallels in our lives: large European families; she built her own name brand, then lost it, then built it up again.” There are shared qualities, too, with her WelleCo co-founder Andrea Horwood. “We’re both mothers with young kids – I have two boys, she has two girls – we’re both, at this point, single, and we’re both creative. It’s helped to create a mutual respect and she’s my go-to for guidance. But it’s also important to build a team of people around you with complementary skills. Andrea’s the CEO of our company, and I’m not. I couldn’t do that. I’m more drawn to the visual aspects of the business.” What would she say are her other strengths? “I’m super-disciplined. The trick is knowing how to use it in a constructive way. For example, I don’t make New Year’s resolutions, I set smaller daily intentions and if I get through them, great.” Do her teenagers ever moan about her discipline? “I often say to them, ‘I’m not here to be popular, I’m here to guide you and if I say there’s something you need to do, it’s because I’m trying to help.’”

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

Another life lesson Macpherson is hoping to pass on to her kids is to do what they love for a living. “It doesn’t mean that the work will always be easy, but it does mean you’ll get that real joy factor at the end of each day. It will give you the inspiration to keep going. My eldest has been fascinated by avionics since he was a child. He spent hours on the computer playing flight-simulator games. He’s at university now but still finds he can spend hours and hours studying flight, so he’s also working towards his pilot’s licence.” Has Macpherson’s own attitude to work changed, given the exhaustion she felt before finding her Super Elixir and building a wellness business? “I think I have a different definition of success now. When younger, I measured success by numbers of magazine covers or income earned, but now I think it’s more like navigating the ups and downs of life and keeping a sense of humour along the way.” And what does she do to keep that on track? “I look after my mental and emotional side as part of my wellness regime. I’ll slow down to eat and really enjoy my food instead of bolting it. Instead of grinding through intense workouts, I’ll do something fun like go for a long bike ride. In many ways, I’m in better shape now for it. And I’ve kept a gratitude journal for years. It’s things like, ‘I feel really connected to my children.’ Or, ‘I’m super-comfortable in my bed right now.’” I ask what 2018 holds for her. “I’d like to expand WelleCo into healthy bodycare products. In 10 years, I’d like the company to be global and mainstream.” Given her tenacity and triumph, I have no doubt that it will be. 📌



ELLE’S BEST THINGS IN LIFE

WHAT KEEPS ME FIT

Skiing and water skiing. I also love swimming long distance – I’ll sometimes go for an hour at a time.

FAVOURITE SPA

The Ranch in Malibu, Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida, or the Espace Henri Chenot in Austria.

SIGNATURE DISH

I’m vegan at the moment so it’s things like veggie wraps or pizza, or vegetable pasta with pesto.

FAVOURITE BEAUTY TREATMENTS

I love a facial by Nichola Joss. She’s amazing. Also, Vaishaly Patel does the best eyebrows in London.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE

Empire State Of Mind by Alicia Keys. Or anything by Eminem.

THE LAST BOOK I DEVoured

Unlock The Power To Heal by Robert Scott Bell.

DREAM DINNER GUEST

Aside from my friends and family, Anthony Bourdain. He’d be so amusing and I’d want to hear about all of his travels.

For more on Elle’s best things in life, visit Redonline.co.uk
