



“ To me, inspirational women are: Authentic, strong, self-aware women ”

Anna-Mieke Rendle

Anna-Mieke Rendle, founder of Mia Donna and The Greener Diamond, has been nominated for the People and Planet award and Next Magazine Woman of the Year, but life for this successful business woman began in Hastings, Hawke's Bay.

Now based in Portland, USA, Anna-Mieke has built an ethical empire which offers a diamond alternative which is environmentally friendly, beautiful and affordable.

After discovering the origin of her earth-mined diamond ring, she set out to find a "conflict free" diamond, but soon discovered the only way around this was a man-made option.

She began researching diamond alternative technology in 2005 and launched MiaDonna.com in 2007. By 2009, the business had grown 192.24 per cent and now sits at #18 on Portland's top 100 Fastest Growing Private Companies for 2012.

MiaDonna was a merger of her daughter's name Mia and her mother's name Donna, which translated means: "my beautiful lady".

"We can now make diamonds in a modern-day lab environment, that are more beautiful and affordable than earth mined diamonds; without the conflict that is associated with getting them out of the earth," Anna-Mieke says. "In today's society couples should not be expected to spend excessive amounts of money on a symbol of their love."

The business also gave back to communities struggling with the unethical harvesting of mined diamonds through Anna-Mieke's charity foundation, The Greener Diamond.

Its biggest project to date was the purchase of a 100acre agricultural farm in Sierra Leone, Africa, run by over 500 reformed child soldiers and local youths.

What drives you to succeed?

My passion and belief for what I do. This is not a job, this is my life's passion. I feel a strong importance to make a difference and do what is right. I started this company because I had to. When I learnt the truth about the diamond industry, I could not sit back and not do anything.

Have we reached an age where women are treated as equal to men?

Hmmm, I love this question! But we could be here all day debating this subject. Generally I feel we are getting there, we are evolving, but with some industries evolving faster than others. In my industry, the diamond industry, it is still heavily based on old ideas and old traditions and it is definitely still a "boys club". However, women do not need to be discouraged by this. I play that to my advantage and when they don't take me seriously, it gives me a chance to fly under the radar. I love the quote by Marilyn Monroe: Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition.

How did you go about reaching your goals?

Doing it!!! I have found that the most effective way to do it, is to just do it. Don't "try" to do something or procrastinate. It's going to take long hours and dedication, but if you have the passion for it, it is well worth the ride.

It also helps to look behind you from time to time, to see how far you have come. It will surprise you and inspire you to keep on going.

What makes a woman inspirational in your mind?

To me, inspirational women are: Authentic, strong, self-aware women that are doing what they believe is right no matter what anybody else says.

Women these days wear so many hats - I am inspired by mothers who do it all and make it look easy (while wearing 6 inch heels).

Who do you look up to?

I know this sounds so cliché, but I would have to say my children. I am inspired to be the person they think I am.

What is one thing that people might not know about you?

I am actually a very shy person, however, my job requires me to do public appearances and live TV/Radio. I have learnt to put on my "game face" in public, since I am kind of introverted. (Shhhh don't tell!).