

## START-UP DIARY

# Relentlessly pursuing success

Building a brand in an overtraded market is not easy, but a young branding expert is getting it right.  
By Monique Verduyn

**DANIELLA SHAPIRO** proved her branding and marketing strengths when she rebranded and rebuilt the CitytoCity Marathon, running it from 2011 to 2013 and getting Bonitas in as the key sponsor. She used this experience, her degree in marketing and the money she made from the hugely successful event, to launch her own brand, DaniellaShapiro.com in 2013, an event planning group with five subsidiary companies.

## Be prepared to work for nothing

"It's a myth that you need a huge amount of capital to finance your company," she says. "Most people are simply not willing to make the sacrifices that come with launching a business. The hardest thing is that you have to work for free and plough earnings back into your venture. I did it because I didn't want any outside investors in my company or to dilute my ownership. This increases risk and means you are often out of pocket, but the rewards are worth it. It took just eight months to break even."

Having proved her knack for turning things around with the marathon, she started her own business by taking a small company that her mother had built over time – Balloons for Africa – and re-launching, along with the other companies in the group.

"Wellness and giving have always been part of my personal ethos, so we also developed the loveglove condom brand, which has a fresh, stylish and fun approach to promoting safe sex. I wanted to have all the businesses, which focus mainly on eventing, under one brand because that makes it possible to ensure synergy."

PHOTO: RICH TOWNSEND

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COMPANY: DaniellaShapiro.com

PLAYER: Daniella Shapiro

EST: 2013

BREAK-EVEN: 8 months

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SNAPSHOT

## Use what you know

Shapiro is a great believer in building relationships and using the resources that become available to you as a result. "I have always been hungry for information, so I learnt everything I could about web development, as one example, and then I worked with people I knew to get my website up and running."

## Have tenacity

"When you launch your own brand, you are in the driver's seat. I asked myself, 'what is the one word you would use to describe yourself? What is going to differentiate

you from the rest in a heavily traded sector? My answer was 'relentless'. The brand represents my own determination, tenaciousness, perseverance and persistence. That's how I have enabled the brand to stand out from the competition, which is critical to success."

Ask her what she's learnt about building a business and she'll tell you that however long you think it will take, times that by three. "I'm a structured person, but I had to learn to be more flexible. You may have to deviate from your business roadmap from time to time, but think of it as a detour and make sure you don't lose your way." **EM**