

ANJA LEWIS

SEIZE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES

SOME PEOPLE HAVE an uncanny ability to create their own future, but there is no secret to how it is done. Anja Lewis is a master of seizing opportunities when she is on the path to her passion.

Opportunity is in abundance in the marketplace. Janine Allis noticed the trend toward fruit smoothies in America, and the gap in the market in Australia. And this is what relatively new entrepreneur Anja Lewis has done. Seized the moment. And all with a glass of wine in her hand.

Originally from East Germany with a string of education behind her, she arrived in Western Australia in 2005. Anja is born to learn. After finishing high school, she decided to undertake a trade instead of going to university, choosing a non-traditional apprenticeship as a heritage plasterer working on construction sites, reviving treasured heritage-listed buildings.

Recognising her potential and desire for continuous improvement, and even with her trade certificate now in her hands, she realised that her true skill was problem solving. Finally ready to face university and based on she picked the easiest subject for women. Not!" she laughs. Mechanical Engineering.

This was a major undertaking which took six years. Of the 100 students enrolling, only 10 were women. She set a goal to graduate by her 30th birthday, which would include doing her practical semester in Australia, although that wasn't on her agenda at the time. Almost two weeks after the goal's anniversary, she graduated, just shy of the day she had promised herself.

After working for five years as a production and operations engineer in Brisbane, the turquoise seas of the Caribbean beckoned. Climbing aboard a yacht for a role as a chef and first mate, Anja delved into the myriad of wine selections and pairing them with menus; she discovered her true passion.

Returning to Perth in 2014, she was well placed to explore her love of wine wandering the vineyards of the grape regions. Her passion was rapidly



GROW

When we step outside our comfort zone, we grow. This comes when we have an idea and running with it. But, as they say in the classics, 'Whoa Nelly!' There is a huge difference between impulsively jumping into the deep-end, to thoughtfully and courageously entering the water. Learn to swim first. If your object of desire is your passion, you will still need training. Research the market. Don't give up your day job (or swap it to one headed in the right direction) and be prepared to make sacrifices.

becoming more than just having a refined drink with her meal. She now laughs that although she is dedicated to learning as much as she can about the wine industry, it will only be as much as her palate can handle.

Anja didn't initially plan on building a business, which is true for many entrepreneurs. By nature, they are problem-solvers, their heads full of ideas to make the world a better place. One reason, however, that many fail or never get off the ground, is lack of training, and failing to have enough self-belief to pursue the skills required to succeed. Of course, with Anja, learning is something that comes easily.

Anja has set about being the best expert in wine she can be and become a Master of Wine by her 50th birthday. In 2016, she commenced her WSET (Wine and Spirit Education Trust) which is made up of three parts. She will approach the third part in 2017. To maximise her learning, she sought out a position as an Assistant Cellar Door Manager. She then handpicked three wineries she wanted experience in to build her portfolio and broaden her horizon.

When Anja achieves her goal, she will be in a select group. She follows the footsteps of Sarah Morphew Stephen MW, who was the first female master of wine.

A Diploma in wine (WSET4) is fiercely competitive to enter, and expensive. Once achieved, comes Anja's pinnacle, the Winemaster qualification. This has global standards originating out of London where the Institute is based. To become a Master of Wine, every component must be passed. However, Anja is not aspiring to complete this to be a 'master', but to round off the knowledge she seeks. She would rather be known as a wine enthusiast who is passionate about all she does.

Not exactly a glass-half-full kinda gal, the academic journey perfectly suits Anja. There is no such thing as a part-qualified Master of Wine.

It's either all or nothing.

The Institute of Masters of Wine's website states there are just 353 winemasters in 28 countries. With a ten year plan of attaining this, Anja aims to collaborate with Wine Australia, Wines of WA, WA Tourism and the wine industry in order to build an extraordinary destination to share her love and

appreciation of Australian wine. “I love taking people on a wine journey, discovering their tastes and senses, while learning a thing or two about the diversity of the wine industry.”

Anja has already made her mark in the Australian wine market. She entered the Vin de Champagne awards by writing eight 800-word essays on the merits of champagne. She became one of just six national finalists. She also enrolled in a Working with Wine Fellowship. With her education mapped out, and experience under her belt, plus a keen understanding of the market, Anja decided it was time to put her money where her mouth is, and start her own business.

In early 2016, she started Canny Grapes, giving grapes a “canny personality - smart grapes who learn something”. And already, she is making headway. Canny Grapes runs wine education, tasting classes, wine travel, wine consulting and corporate events. She has kept her “day job” as a Territory Manager for Tirage Wines, expanding on her knowledge, however, she is quick to add, “I don’t see it as a day job, but part of the rich process of seizing opportunities and experience needed to build my business.”

A love of people and life makes this a perfect role for this woman who has a knack of lighting up a room when she enters. One could say, her personality is the perfect accompaniment to wine.

While it would be wonderful to be writing this story a little further along her journey, it is somehow fitting she appears in *Extra.Ordinary.™ Businesswomen*, because sometimes, we can forget the steps we took to get where we wanted to go. Anja represents the agility, passion and desire needed to achieve even the most basic of goals. She doesn’t take notice of obstacles, but comes up with solutions before she’s even perceived them (if she ever does) to be a problem.

Opportunities come to those who remain open-minded to every possibility. That is at the heart of creativity. Playing to your strengths opens doors, while knowing where you need to fill gaps, such as Anja and wine education, is critical to success. Swapping the watery playground of Richard Branson and roaming the world with her husband by her side to explore the vineyards of WA, Anja has discovered her passion in the dulcet tones of wine, for the moment at least.

Satisfying
your thirst for
knowledge and
continuously
evolving is the
key to success and
the foundation to
motivation.

ANJA LEWIS



Opportunity is
missed by most
people because
it is dressed in
overalls and looks
like work.

THOMAS A. EDISON
