

## Q&A with Look Fabulous Forever founder, Tricia Cusden

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We talk to Tricia Cusden, founder of Look Fabulous Forever about setting up her company and some of the challenges she has faced on the path to becoming a finalist in the Guardian's startup of the year category.

### 1. What inspired you to start your own business?

I have always been entrepreneurial and ran my own management training consultancy for 25 years before I started Look Fabulous Forever so I have some experience in running a business. I have always loved makeup and was feeling increasingly frustrated at having to search for suitable makeup from several different brands. I also had a growing awareness that the beauty industry doesn't market itself to older women like me. So I decided to do something about it by developing a range of makeup products specifically formulated for older skin.

### 2. What is the biggest challenge you have found setting up and running your own business?

I was totally new to the beauty business when I started so it was a question of finding a manufacturer who would support me (and my budget) and enable me to produce makeup in manageable quantities. Fortunately I found that person who loved my idea and agreed to work flexibly with me. I conceived the business as a makeover party business where I would sell products face to face, but as our makeup tutorials on YouTube took off and started attracting over a 1,000 views a day, we started to receive orders from all over the world. I quickly realised that I didn't need to do makeover parties in order to reach the right audience and grow my business. We now sell online to over 23 countries.

### 3. In a crowded beauty market, what do you think has been key to your success?

Makeup for the young is indeed a crowded market, however my niche target market is not at all crowded! Very few brands make specific products for or market exclusively to older women. I think we've been successful because there are huge numbers of older women (roughly over 55) who love our pro-age (as opposed to the prevailing anti-age) message – it's about looking better rather than younger and it's about being comfortable with the odd wrinkle.

### 4. What has surprised you most about your experience?

Our business has used social media very successfully – our ten YouTube tutorials have now had over 650,000 views and we have a very engaged Facebook audience who love to comment and contribute to what we're doing and saying. I had no idea there were so many older women, all over the world who used these channels in such large numbers and that it would be key to our growth and success.

### 5. What have you found most enjoyable about running your own company?

I love the feedback we get from our customers about the makeup and how it makes them feel. We regularly get comments from women saying they are so thankful to have found us, how we have boosted their confidence and how we offer an alternative to the beauty halls staffed by young women selling them an overwhelming array of products which don't work. All this positive feedback makes the business very enjoyable! I am also working with my daughter which is an added bonus. Anna is as interested in and passionate about the business as I am and sharing the highs and occasional lows with her is fantastic.

### 6. Do you have any advice for those who are thinking of starting up?

Obviously financial planning is key and I was fortunate that I could use my savings to take the risk of starting my own business. But I believe being entrepreneurial is about taking risks and not really being sure what's round the corner. And if you never take the risk, you will never know. It's also important to find good people who you trust to supply you with what you need to get going. In our case we had critically important relationships with a cosmetic manufacturer, a graphic designer, a web designer and a photographer/video maker before we could launch the business. However my main advice would be 'just do it!' There are lots of people out there with great ideas who never take that first vital step.

### 7. What does the future hold for you and Look Fabulous Forever?

I am very excited by our future. We have just been shortlisted (down to the last three) for the Guardian's StartUp Business of the Year Award 2014 which is great exposure for us. The business continues to grow month on month as more and more older women discover our products. We have plans to make more video tutorials and increase our presence on YouTube, and also to explore both retail and wholesale opportunities. I'd

say our future is very bright.

**8. What is your favourite product and why?**

Obviously I love all our products and the ways in which they work on older skin, but I would probably choose our Fabulous Face Prime. Not many older women know about primers but they are fantastic for smoothing fine lines and wrinkles, helping makeup stay in place all day and giving your face a lovely freshness. So if I had to choose one product for my desert island, it would probably be that!