

Crusading Fervour

Brigid Hardy must be something of a marketer's dream. As general manager of start-up company B_E_E (Beauty Engineered for Ever) which makes environmentally sustainable household cleaning products, Hardy has all the credentials to promote an eco-friendly brand.

The marketing push to date has centred around the brand's eco-credentials and some very savvy design.

It stems from Hardy's natural inclination to crusade for reform and (according to a publicity statement) "a natural fervour for doing things differently".

Hawkes Bay-born Hardy's first job after graduating from Otago University with degrees in law and English literature entailed working on reforming domestic violence legislation. She then gained a scholarship to Harvard Law School where she specialised in international law and human rights.

Back in New Zealand, Hardy worked in constitutional law for cabinet minister Sir Douglas Graham as his private secretary.

"My experience in the States, in the Beehive and even working with the UN made me realise that power resides in the business world and that you have to understand it to change it."

She joined global consultancy firm McKinsey in 1999, becoming the first woman in the firm's New Zealand office.

Hardy's drive to do business differently combined with her passion for social, environmental and cultural causes led to the founding of B_E_E.

"B_E_E is a combination of three quite different parts of me. There's that 'save the world' side – the reason why B_E_E is committed not just to environmentalism, but also to ethical business that makes a difference. There's the business side – and the chance to apply world-class business practice... to causes that really deserve it.

"And then, I just love beautifully designed things. Design is at the core of the B_E_E business model because if environmentally sound products are designed well enough, people won't be able to resist them."

