

# BRW magazine feature Design Thinking

**In August 2007 BRW magazine highlighted how Australian companies are using design thinking as an innovation tool. Deborah Kneeshaw, her client Bernard Desmidt of Terrapinn and participants from her three-day executive program at the Australian Graduate School of Management were featured in Anthony Sibillin's breaking story. The article is summarised below.**

In his book *A Whole New Mind*, Dan Pink says: " ...it's no longer enough to create a product, service or experience that's reasonably priced and functional. In the age of abundance, consumers will demand something more."

Quoted in the BRW article, Deborah Kneeshaw explains that "hitting on that 'something more' is where design thinking can help". Kneeshaw's executive program for the AGSM applies the design process to corporate strategy and innovation.

The program has attracted participants from Insurance Australia Group, Railcorp, Australia Post, Westpac and Australian Unity. It aims to impart a set of design-based techniques participants can apply to their workplace.

The first of these is to observe consumers engaging with products. David Hollis, AGSM graduate and marketing manager of Targus, used this process to glean valuable insights about how consumers interact with his company's laptop accessories. According to the article, he found that "... people buy with their hearts and not their heads..." and that "Americans prefer natural materials". He also discovered that "what they say does not equate with what they do".

Brainstorming is the next step. Designers don't

confine themselves to the butchers' paper and markers found in so many boardrooms; they use a wide range of materials to provoke fresh ideas.

Railcorp project director Rino Matarratzo found this one of the most valuable aspects of the AGSM program. He explained to Sibillin that now, when he gets stuck on an issue, he's just as likely to "pull out a sheet of paper and colored pencils as he is to load up a spreadsheet". According to Kneeshaw such visual stimulation "helps trigger the sorts of unanticipated associations that lead to breakthroughs and innovation."

Bernard Desmidt, Global Talent director of Terrapinn, a client of Kneeshaw's consulting practice, credits design thinking for Terrapinn's five years run of 30 percent annual growth. Quoted in the article, he says: "What we do is produce conferences. But the business we are in is ... arts and entertainment. The sound, lighting, food, networking – everything has to be designed."

Finally, Kneeshaw cautions that design thinking is more than a process. "It's about having a culture that's open to ideas. If you follow the steps, you will get a result. But to get the wow factor, you need that creative mindset."

*Deborah helps organisations harness design thinking to create remarkable products, services and strategies.*