

## Melbourne Mum Swaps a Career of Crime for the Beauty Business

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After spending six years at university earning her degree in Criminology, Joana Calado (pictured), turned her back on crime when she became a mother. Today, the Melbourne mother of three, runs two successful online businesses, Ella Bleau Jewellery and The Beauty Club.

Joana Calado told Australian Women Online, "It took me six years of university to finish that degree and I worked at the Children's Hospital for a little while before falling pregnant. I was working with children who were severely abused and it was a great job up until I had my first child, then I saw it from a completely different angle. I knew that I wouldn't be able to work with the same objectivity."

When Joana left the paid workforce she was content to play the role of stay-at-home mum, until opportunity came knocking in 2004.

"I was in Hong Kong with my husband when I saw an opportunity to start sourcing jewellery. At the time I felt there was a real lack of quality sterling silver jewellery with simulants in Australia," Joana said.

Shortly after launching her first online store at [www.ellableaujewellery.com.au](http://www.ellableaujewellery.com.au), Joana was surprised to find a higher than expected demand for this type of jewellery.

"A lot of people have problems with the ethics of the diamond trade and I found a lot of customers actually buy the simulants now because they have these views."

Ella Bleau Jewellery stocks over 80 products made with the finest quality sterling silver, 18K gold and 14K gold and cultured and fresh water pearls, and unique diamond simulants.

"I have a very limited number of pieces available per item and per style and I think that's what's made us so unique and successful," Joana said. "It's not mass produced by any means and I only sell 30 to 40 of each item because I like people to feel special when they buy my jewellery."

The products sold at [www.ellableaujewellery.com.au](http://www.ellableaujewellery.com.au) are sourced from overseas and imported into Australia by Joana Calado herself. With the higher Aussie dollar, importing goods into the country has now become much cheaper and hence, more profitable for small business owners – a fact Joana can well appreciate after the Global Financial Crisis forced her to lower membership fees of The Beauty Club earlier this year.

Knowing that online beauty stores face some stiff competition in what is fast becoming an over-crowded market, it puzzles me why so many women choose to start-up an online beauty store, especially when you consider that most of these stores source their products from the one supplier located overseas. But Joana Calado is a very smart lady, she came up with a business model that enabled her to compete with that giant of all online beauty stores, StrawberryNet.

The Beauty Club, was launched in 2008 and is now Australia's fastest growing online membership beauty website. Located on the web at [www.thebeautyclub.com.au](http://www.thebeautyclub.com.au), the site has 16,000 designer cosmetic, fragrance and skincare products to choose from and Joana is able to offer members these products at the cheapest prices on the Internet (even cheaper than strawberry.net), with free delivery and 3 free products per year.

"I wanted to offer the most competitive prices and in order to do so I had to get a fee from the customer to be part of this club and because I get a small annual fee from our customers, I'm able to offer the cheapest prices on the market. Beauty club members are also able to access free information, free products and a concierge service, so if they've been after a particular product for a while we'll try and source it for them," Joana explained.

"If people feel like they're a part of something, I've found that you'll be able to retain their loyalty and they'll keep coming back. With so much competition online you have to be able to offer something different that makes you stand out from all the rest."

"I also love shopping and I love to buy beauty products. So it was something that I was interested in and I understood what women are looking for in this area. With an online store it's far easier to enter the market because start-up costs are low and you're able to access more customers."

"But this year we found we had to lower our membership fee and that had a lot to do with the Global Financial Crisis. Having lowered the subscription fee and the renewal fee, we have found that more people are now signing up. It's been a bit of a learning experience for us having to modify our practices to take into account what's going on in the rest of the world."

Joana Calado maintains an office in Melbourne but because she drop-ships to her customers, The Beauty Club doesn't need a warehouse to store the products they sell.

"We have a partner located overseas who has a huge warehouse. We send through the orders and they ship them out to our customers all over the world. I also have three fabulous girls in my office who answer the phone and deal with all my customers."

This means Joana is only required to spend 2 days a week in the office and the rest of the week she spends at home with her three children aged 5, 3 and 12 months.

For more information or to join *The Beauty Club* visit the website [www.thebeautyclub.com.au](http://www.thebeautyclub.com.au)