

Metropolitan edition

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MyCareer

Sweet smell of success

HOTSHOT

Jodie McGregor, 36
Florist

Why did you become a florist?

I just liked the fact of it being creative and a bit service-oriented. There are many aspects to the job. And, of course, the flowers. It's lovely to work with a product that changes with the seasons. I was always into nature as a child, but I guess you don't realise until you're older that you have flower memories that stick in your head.

What training do you need?

When I started, 15 years ago, the only course was through TAFE. It was a three-year, part-time course. Since then, a lot more private courses have become available and a lot of it is on-the-job training.

Three years sounds like a long time.

Well, there's flower identification and learning the scientific names of flowers. You go through the different [flower arrangement] designs involved with weddings and funerals, so it's quite elaborate. There's a lot more to it than people realise.

When did you set up your business?

I set up Jodie McGregor Flowers in Annandale seven years ago with my husband, Stewart.

Is working with your husband a pleasure or a curse?

It works really well because Stewart's background is finance and he's probably more into the marketing side of the business, whereas I concentrate on the retail and flower side. We also employ five girls in the store, although we try not to have too much of a hierarchy. Rather than delegating the work, everyone does the same sort of job. It's the best way for people to learn.

You've won professional awards. How does competitive floristry work?

The first competition that we won, NSW Florist of the Year 2003-4, is run by the Sydney Flower Market. We were quite chuffed because it was judged by our peers in the flower industry. They "mystery-shop" us in the store and critique us on all sorts of things from store presentation to flower knowledge and the quality of the stock. **So you're never quite sure if someone in the shop is a genuine customer?**



Photo: Wade Laube

We try not to think about it. If you win an award like that, it's nice to think that's how you are all the time, that it's not just put on.

People often want flowers at sad times. Do you ever have to comfort the bereaved?

Yes, that's why the service part of it is so important. When you employ a florist you've got to employ on personality not skills, because you learn the skills on the job.

Have there been emotional experiences?

A standout is a lady who lived across the road. I did her wedding flowers. Within about two years, I had to do her funeral flowers. Her husband wanted me to do something similar to

her wedding bouquet and I found it was [the lady's family] trying to console me.

Where do you get your flowers?

The Sydney Flower Market and we get orchids and tropical foliage from Singapore. The outer areas of Melbourne and Sydney are the best places to find flowers. Places such as Glenorie and Dural are fantastic.

What are your favourite flowers?

Garden-style flowers - roses and gardenia and blossoms - but it depends. If it were my birthday today, I'd just want a lovely posy of sweet peas and blossoms but tomorrow it'll be different.

Alan Mascarenhas