

# Integrity, Inc.



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*Rosemary Ann Ogilvie talks to Diana Barnett, director of SevenCanaries (www.sevencanaries.com.au), an online resource for toxin-free living.*  
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**S**EVENCANARIES is helping to create a healthier and more sustainable world through the reduction of potentially harmful chemicals that can affect our wellbeing. Achieving this involves raising awareness by providing information. Plus, both SevenCanaries and The Toxic Fox Show – its podcast for conscious-business owners – are creating a community of similarly focused businesses. This community provides a platform to consolidate and connect with other conscious businesses and conscious consumers, which in turn gives them a bigger voice.

**Q. What was the catalyst for starting SevenCanaries?** A wonderful ‘ah-ha’ moment! Many of us don’t know what goes into products we routinely use, and so we don’t know what those products are doing to our health, let alone to our planet. The extreme lack of transparency around this inhibits the public’s ability to make informed and mindful choices. Yet this is critical for parents who want to give their young children the best start to life, and for anyone suffering illnesses and sensitivities triggered by common ingredients. How can they know, when potentially harmful substances like BPA lurk behind innocent-sounding words like ‘fragrance’? My thought, “This is just not right” was followed with the automatic, “Someone should do something”. It was then I realised, we all have the freedom to choose, therefore we can all make a difference – provided we have the knowledge. Big change

comes from taking one small step at a time, and it had to start with me.

**Q. What are your major goals?** I want a world where there is no need for businesses like SevenCanaries, because the marketplace is transparent and consumers know exactly what ingredients go into any product, and can make informed decisions. While this perfect world is evolving, I want SevenCanaries to be the search engine people turn to with confidence when researching toxin-free products. I want it to be a trusted resource that draws regular contributions from experts and specialists to continually educate and update our community. I want business owners associated with SevenCanaries to connect and collaborate with one another, continually pushing the boundaries and consolidating their enterprises into profitable businesses. And I hope to achieve my long-held desire to contribute 20 percent of profits to organisations like National Toxic Network, Friends of the Earth, and Australian Certified Organic that do awesome work on our behalf.

**How do you find working in a conscious business compared to the typical corporate culture?** I always tried to make sustainable decisions in my previous corporate roles as I was strongly influenced by my father, who obtained his Masters degree in Environmental Science during the 1970s and was always talking about the effects of human impact on the environment. I also think greater demand is being placed on businesses today, evidenced in the construction and property-development industry embracing ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and consumer demand for BPA-free products. New organisations are forcing the corporate world to look closely at itself, such as Conscious Capitalism® (“builds on the basic principles of capitalism to include trust, compassion, collaboration and value creation” www.consciouscapitalism.org), and B Corp (“B Corp is to business what Fair Trade certification is to coffee” www.bcorporation.net). Moreover, the millennial generation wants to work for organisations that have a positive social and environmental impact.

**Can you share some innovations in your sector?** It’s exciting! The world is changing, and it’s steered by passionate conscious-business

owners driven by profit-with-purpose. There’s also a major social and attitudinal change: people are forcing change because of health concerns. No longer is this space the domain of hippies, greenies or tree huggers: today’s switched-on mothers insist on healthy, sustainable options for their families – always with proviso that good design is not sacrificed.

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**What are the biggest roadblocks to success?** Profit-with-purpose or conscious businesses have more stakeholders and elements to consider beyond investors – employees and culture, the environment, society, supply chains, and customers. However, being ethical/sustainable adds another cost, which can negatively impact the bottom line. And of course business is hard, anyway: most ‘overnight successes’ are built on a minimum of five years’ relentless slog.

**What inspires you about conscious businesses operators?** Their passion and commitment to make a difference, and their refusal to accept traditional paradigms. They care beyond themselves: making a positive impact on society and the environment a part of their daily considerations. And also their resilience to keep going when it’s tough.

**And what frustrates you?** In this sector, money can sometimes be a dirty word. Business owners don’t always feel at ease with money. There should be no conflict between profit and passion, but sometimes the thinking is you can’t be conscious and profitable. However, conscious businesses need to be profitable to make the differences they desire. The other frustration is our throwaway society, wanting to buy the cheapest option without considering the value, quality and impact of a product. ✨

## \* Diana’s top conscious business tips

- **Be clear on what you want to achieve.** Know your purpose and articulate it though your mission, vision, values and goals. Share it with your team: some people use formal documents and others use mind maps, whatever works for you is fine.
- **Finding a niche is a challenge, but don’t be afraid of it.** Have clarity and focus: develop one niche and then move onto another. Do your research, know your market.
- **If you’re not passionate about and totally committed to your product, you can’t expect others to be.** Your passion also helps power you through tough patches.
- **Don’t wait to be perfect.** Get to the market, and evolve from there using feedback to build a better product/service.
- **Don’t be an island.** Connect and collaborate with like-minded people as communities give strength.