

Busy is Beautiful

PHOTOGRAPHY SUSANNAH JAFFER

They say some people thrive off having a lot on their plate, and ELLA SHERMAN is definitely one of them. We chat to the superwoman entrepreneur about her new beauty business, **Glowella**, and discover the one thing she wishes she had more time for. (Hint: it's not sleep!)

You've had such a colourful life and career. Tell us about your journey and what it's taught you.

I left home at 17 with a bin bag of my belongings. Putting myself through university meant I worked many different part-time jobs, and I think that turned me into a grafter and taught me to be fearless at throwing myself into new experiences.

Since university, my career has taken many turns. I spent nearly a decade in human resources in investment banking, followed by a radical shift into spa management and beauty therapy as the Director of Operations for St. Gregory Spas Singapore. After that, for the past ten years I've been working in residential and commercial property both locally and overseas, and in the distribution of six UK and US brands in department stores here.



Currently, I juggle my two businesses Glowella and Animal Merchandise, and also work as an agent for a property agency called Premiere Realty. One minute, I could be doing a viewing for a multi-million-dollar house in Bukit Timah; the next, I'm doing merchandising on the floor of a department store, getting my feather duster out to tidy up my display. It sounds quite hectic, but I love the variety and being my own boss. I also really like coming up with an idea, researching it, creating a brand and launching it on the market. It's very satisfying to create something from nothing, and knowing it was your brainchild. I'm sure every entrepreneur shares that feeling!

What inspired you to start Glowella?

Having suffered from very bad skin in my teens, I know how important a good skincare regime is. The products we sell on Glowella (our brands include Cult51 and Instant Effects) are all ones I've tried and tested myself and have loved the results.

As a beauty junkie, and having been frustrated in the past by web orders that went missing in the post, I also wanted to make these particular products more available for purchase in Singapore. I'm now the exclusive distributor for them here. Both Cult51 and Instant Effects have won many awards in the UK, and recently Cult51 was voted Best Day Cream of 2017 by the Daily Express.

I've been expanding my distribution business over the past six years to diversify our product range. I distribute kitchenware, cushions, bags, candles and diffusers, Christmas decorations and tableware, and now skincare. I chose Singapore to launch the business as I've lived here since 2004 and absolutely love it here. It's the greatest country on earth! What's more, there are a lot of governmental schemes helping small businesses, and I've found it to be a well-organised place to set up a company.

What would be your number one beauty tip?

There are many! Be a vegetarian or, better still, go vegan. It honestly makes your skin look a decade younger! Less meat, processed foods and cholesterol makes a huge difference. I'm also a big fan of the DreamSkin Pillowcase, which helps to hydrate your skin overnight and reduce fine lines and wrinkles.



As an entrepreneur running multiple gigs, your time must be precious. Is there anything you wish you had more minutes for?

Washing my hair. I'm serious! You should see me during the Christmas retail season. I'm a hot mess. A typical day involves me hauling boxes around my warehouse, driving a delivery van into loading bays full of aggressive lorry drivers, and then conducting several back-to-back property viewings. It's a lot of hard work, so much so that by Christmas Day I'm normally semi-comatose. Then, our Christmas display tear-downs start at 10pm on the day itself.

Any tips for other entrepreneurs looking to start their own retail business?

Do your homework rather than jumping in feet first. I've found you should double the amount you think you need to purchase for stock and marketing, because it always ends up being more costly than you thought. Your income is like a rollercoaster, and the highs and lows can be stressful. You need to be available around the clock, and it can be hard to take holidays. I'm lucky if I can get away for a long weekend a few times a year! Sometimes, I look back on corporate life and miss the stability it offered. *ella*

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