

# Making money, making a difference

Entrepreneurs are giving back to the community through their businesses BY LAUREN SHAPIRO

**M**ANY OF US ARE SO BUSY MAKING A LIVING THAT WE feel we barely have time to give back to our communities. *Jewish Life* speaks to some inspiring entrepreneurs who manage to strike that fine balance. Combining ethics and economics, these remarkable individuals are making great money while making a difference to those around them.

## LEAVING A LEGACY

*Sue Randall, founder, Legacy*



So many people have incredible life stories and say things like 'I could write a book about my life!' Sadly, few actually achieve this aim. Writer and editor Sue Randall saw a gap in the market and launched the Legacy project, a business aimed at preserving the stories of members of our community.

"The Torah itself is evidence of a need to record and tell the stories of our lives, the lives of those who went before us, the life of our community," says Sue. She believes that by chronicling these stories in a tangible

form, we can preserve important lessons and values. Her books have both artistic appeal and sentimental value, while also being a rich source of factual information.

An MA in research psychology means that Sue is able to deal sensitively with deeply personal material. She can also identify the main themes of people's lives and work these into a meaningful narrative, portraying the essence of their personality as well as the basic biographical facts. "Writing a good story is about both the process and the final product," she explains.

By creating the Legacy project, Sue says she is expressing the Divine spark within herself. "By elevating my gifts to the level where I am using them to run a business, not only am I doing what my soul needs to do, but I can also help my clients to identify their own special spark, which will show up through the central themes of a person's life. It's a very exciting process." The books that come out of her business will no doubt inspire and uplift other people too, from the subject's family and friends to members of the greater community.

In combining her business with a service to society, Sue manages to effect both tikkun nefesh (repair of the soul) and tikkun olam (repair of the world). "I believe that these two kinds of tikkun must go hand-in-hand. In a very real sense, we are the world, so when we heal ourselves we are healing the world, and when we heal the world we are healing ourselves."

For more information on the Legacy project, visit [www.mystory.co.za](http://www.mystory.co.za).

## SOMETIMES, GOING ROUND IN CIRCLES IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

*Mark Melman, director, Roundabout Outdoor*



"I was brought up in an offbeat, artistic, traditional Jewish home," says Mark Melman. "My parents were always involved in charity initiatives and we were nurtured with the values of respect, appreciation, and tzedakah – not forgetting matzah



balls, herring, and Bobbe's taigelach!"

Mark has carried over all of these (well, most of them) into his career.

He is the director of Roundabout Outdoor, a company which partners with the governments of several southern African countries to provide clean water to rural communities through a revolutionary sustainable pumping system called a PlayPump.

Access to clean water is enshrined in South Africa's Bill of Rights, yet thousands of South Africans live without this basic resource. Particularly in rural communities, people have to walk anything up to five kilometres a day to collect water from streams, rivers and dams – with no guarantee that the water collected is fit for human consumption. Often children (especially girls) are kept out of school because they need to collect water for their families.

Not only is there a solution to this problem – there's a profitable business opportunity!

Powered by the play of children, the PlayPump combines two of the basic rights of children – the right to clean water and the right to play. "I am privileged to be able to assist schools in rural communities," notes Mark. "Water is essential for life, and our PlayPump concept allows children to have fun while providing free drinking water on a daily basis."

He explains: "It's basically a roundabout, which sits on top of a borehole, so as the children play, water is pumped into a storage tank, which the community can access whenever they need it."

But in addition to the wonderful mitzvah of providing underprivileged communities with clean water, the company manages to make a profit and ensure a return on investment to donors by utilising the marketing opportunities inherent in the scheme.

"Each water tank tower is surrounded by large advertising boards, which are used for commercial branding," Mark observes. "They can also be used for public health and educational messages, such as hand-washing campaigns."

Since the installation of the first PlayPump in 1998, Roundabout Water Solutions has installed over 1 000 PlayPumps in South Africa, as well as hundreds in Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique.

Mark concludes: "It feels heart-warming to know that our company and staff are motivated by more than monetary values. I believe that every person has the capacity to not only prosper in their chosen field, but also to channel energy and resources into areas of need and programmes of upliftment."

For more information, visit <http://www.playpumps.co.za>.



## BEACON OF LIGHT

*Jonathan Liebmann, managing director, Propertuity*

Sometimes they start young. Jonathan Liebman has been in business since he was 15, running everything from clubs to a mobile coffee business, and even a laundry service. But it was his passion for property that led to his acclaimed inner-city regeneration project in eastern Johannesburg.



The Maboneng Precinct, an architectural and social phenomenon, can best be described as artistic tikkun. Jonathan's company Propertuity buys and reinvents old buildings to provide exciting new spaces for "alternative lifestyles, workspaces and retail spaces".

"I had this idea to create a micro-economy – a landscape for entrepreneurship, a place for up-and-coming artists to live, work, collaborate and exhibit their work." >

PHOTOGRAPHS OF MARK MELMAN AND JONATHAN LIEBMANN BY ILAN OSSENDRYVER; OTHERS, SUPPLIED

So in 2008, Jonathan purchased the old DF Corlett Construction offices and warehouses and converted them into the space that is now Arts on Main – a mix of galleries, private artist studios, advertising agencies and retail spaces. Today Arts on Main is a celebrated part of Johannesburg’s cultural landscape, associated with the likes of world-renowned William Kentridge, the Goodman Gallery and The Goethe Institute, as well as local artists and groups David Krut, Kim Lieberman, Mikhail Subotzky and the Nirox Foundation.

The company’s next major development was Main Street Life,

light’ in Sotho, and it represents an age of enlightenment where the socially conscious can engage with their environment on a more meaningful level,” says Jonathan.

In addition to the business opportunities, he is expanding to support community and social initiatives, including the refurbishment of inner-city crèches, lighting and securing the streets of the neighbourhood, and the commissioning of public artworks.

“Consumers are looking to buy products and services that are responsible. It makes business sense to make sure that your intentions are aligned with these needs.

There are so many opportunities in South Africa at the moment to be doing something that adds value outside of conventional financial gain. People should be taking advantage of that.”

*For more information, visit [www.mainstreetlife.co.za](http://www.mainstreetlife.co.za).*



**“I REALLY BELIEVE IN DESIGN AND ITS ABILITY TO CHANGE THE WORLD,’ JONATHAN MUSES. JONATHAN PLACES A STRONG FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN, INCORPORATING EXISTING FEATURES AND RECYCLED MATERIALS INTO HIS PROJECTS.”**

which transformed a 1970s industrial building into a mixed-use complex with residential apartments, creative workspaces, retail shops, a restaurant, an independent cinema, a rooftop events venue and a boutique hotel.

Jonathan shows no sign of slowing down. The Precinct promises new developments including sound and film studios, a skate park and a Museum of African Design. “I really believe in design and its ability to change the world,” Jonathan muses. Jonathan places a strong focus on environmental design, incorporating existing features and recycled materials into his projects.

How does he feel about bringing such positive change to an area that many had written off for good? “Maboneng means ‘place of

**WASTE NOT, WANT NOT**

*Jeremy Droyman, managing director, Don’t Waste Services*  
Durbanite Jeremy Droyman literally built his business on the stuff everything else was throwing away.

This ethical entrepreneur saw the value in recycling – in both the planetary and monetary sense – and in 1994 he started

Don’t Waste Services, a company specialising in on-site waste management and minimisation, turning mountains of waste into a resource, rather than an expensive nuisance.

Today DWS is a national company, recycling thousands of tons of waste each month at hundreds of sites across South Africa.

Behind glamorous facades of public spaces such as Sandton City, Gateway Theatre of Shopping, Menlyn Park, Canal Walk, Cape Town International Airport, major retailers like Pick n Pay, and hotels such as the Elangeni and Sandton Sun, Don’t Waste’s recyclers are busy at work. DWS trains and employs thousands of people, fulfilling the Rambam’s highest level of tzedakah.

Jeremy’s model is simple, but brilliant: get as close to where

the rubbish is created as possible, separate it before it becomes contaminated, and increase the percentage recycled. This labour-intensive process is worth every carbon credit.

“I saw the potential to do something really good, as well as to create a solid business,” says Jeremy. “Initially we weren’t taken seriously and the merits of our service were based purely on the economics of our proposal, but when major corporates were willing to look to the future, without legislative, political, or social pressure, and introduce on-site recycling to their businesses, we were on our way...”

In 2001 the South African government – discerning ecological disaster – recognised the urgent need to reduce, re-use and recycle waste. The Polokwane Declaration on Waste Management was issued, requiring businesses to reduce their waste to landfill by 50% by 2012, and 100% by 2022.

Jeremy confronted this challenge with characteristic dynamism, and began developing state-of-the-art software, HR and logistics systems to manage waste compliance.

Since the new Waste Act was written into law in 2008, Jeremy’s vision has been vindicated. “The rewards for the sacrifice and hard work are our recycling numbers. Liberty Midlands Mall, Canal Walk and some of our Pick n Pay stores are averaging above 80%, way in excess of the 50% required by government, and I’m proud that my company will help South Africa get to 100%, create thousands of jobs, and ensure my family and community live on a cleaner planet.”

*For more information, visit [www.dontwaste.co.za](http://www.dontwaste.co.za).*



PHOTOGRAPH OF COINS BY ILAN OSSENDRYVER; OTHERS, SUPPLIED

