

## **Combined Vision Creates Natural Platform for Group of Businesses**

By Wendy Maddocks of Dr. Wendy's 100% Botanical Skin Care

I was thrilled when Becky Cashman from Goodbye Sandfly contacted me some months ago about her idea of developing a collaborative on line magazine with contributions from a range of natural based businesses in New Zealand. The concept of integrating social media marketing and individual business networks (such as Natural Products New Zealand), alongside a diverse range of businesses in a collective media was rather inspiring. Becky's enthusiasm and e-'nagging' (is there such a thing?) kept the attention sharp. As time went by it was apparent that there was a core group of businesses that could see the longer term benefits of working together on such a unique project.

As small business owners, it could be very easy to keep our heads tucked down under our own umbrella, and feel that if we help out others who may be operating in a similar field, we may lose customers, or give away some 'secrets'. However, having a combined voice creates a platform from which all of us benefit

Getting people to 'like' you on Facebook is easy (relatively), but getting them to actually sign up to receive something is a lot harder and in a very short period of time several hundred made the giant leap from liking to signing up. My prediction is this will grow significantly with each edition.

Part of the appeal is that people are not being 'sold to'- rather in Becky's words the magazine is 'a how to and inspiration on living a more natural life'. The paradox with this, is that to get across the message of "natural", the full weight of technology is called for, with web & social media channels enabling efficient on line communication & generating the elusive "buzz"..

There are lots of goodies in the magazine (each issue is also posted on the website) to keep people coming back and also to recommend it. Dotted through the magazine are images and links to youtube and other sites which all increase the respective profiles and provide good, long term backlinks for SEO purposes. Customers want interaction, information & generosity, and they reward those efforts with loyalty. Ultimately there will be spin off both for Goodbye Sandfly and the contributors. Together, 10 contributors have created a platform of goodwill in one week of "launching". As a group we have achieved significantly more than any equal individual business effort could have achieved in isolation.