

# A multimedia future for women in business

After celebrating her women's business magazine's first birthday, Rosemary Delaney spoke to Catherine O'Mahony about multimedia



Rosemary Delaney, Women Mean Business: 'The media was totally under-representing women in business'

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**P**ublisher/entrepreneur Rosemary Delaney, a former chair of the Periodical Publishers' Association, loves print. "I always will," she said. "But the generation coming up behind us is a whole different thing altogether."

It is this thinking that has led Delaney to formulate much of the planning for her fledgling bi-monthly glossy magazine, *WMB* (Women Mean Business) to target online media.

A *WMB* website was launched earlier this year, the inaugural *WMB* conference is scheduled for October and Delaney has trademarked the *WMB* brand in Ireland and in Britain.

Her plan is to expand significantly the online part of her business, up to and including introducing paid-for content to the site. Within 12 to 18 months, she said, she would take action on establishing her business model in Britain. She said she would also be interested in bringing the concept to television.

"This is a multimedia proposition," she said.

"We are moving away from

traditional publishing."

Delaney is printing 12,000 copies of *WMB* magazine, achieving a circulation of 8,000. Some 5,000 copies go out by direct mail and around 3,000 copies are sold, mainly through subscription (the figures aren't yet audited externally, but they will be from January next year).

The magazine was launched in April 2006 after Delaney identified what she thought was a clear, and unserved, niche in the magazine market for a glossy magazine that dealt with the issues – both in careers and lifestyle – facing Irish businesswomen.

"I actually had the idea five or six years ago, but the time wasn't right then," she said. "Two years ago, when I looked at it again, I knew it was."

Delaney has invested her own money in her venture. Until last year she had been working for design consultancy Newworld, and before then, she was managing director of Mac Publications, the company behind the *Irish Medical News* and various other contract titles.

Her earlier background involved work for a variety of media organisations, including

Century Radio and Dandelion, a free ads paper.

But she said she was keen to start something herself. "I always loved going into set-up situations. And I am very determined."

So the result is a genuine novelty in Irish publishing – a glossy magazine featuring articles about investment, management skills and website design alongside features about well-known businesswomen (Jacqueline Gold, chief executive of Ann Summers is in the current issue and is also a speaker at the upcoming conference) and a horoscope section called 'business-scopes'.

The target market is anyone female, in work, and older than 27, according to Delaney. The free copies are sent to women in middle management and who own their own businesses, but the magazine is geared to people lower down the chain as well. "I think this is the kind of title that sells by word of mouth. And it's not just for people who want to be the managing director, it's about gaining knowledge and experience."

The research insights behind the magazine include the fact that women wanted more

mentors in the business world and that, at the same time, the number of women going into business was growing globally.

In America, for instance, Delaney said 50 per cent of privately owned businesses are owned by women.

"But it was a gut feeling too," said Delaney. "The media was totally under-representing women in business... and the fact that there are so few women in politics just makes me cringe."

Some large brands are embracing this concept. O2 is the title sponsor of the upcoming *WMB* conference, while Accenture, Irish Life, Bank of Ireland and the county enterprise boards are also backing the event.

Delaney has also recently been named one of the members of Ireland's first ever Press Council. She is one of five media figures on that council, alongside Michael McNiffe of the *Irish Sun*, Eoin McVey of the *Irish Times*, Michael Deneffe of Independent Newspapers and Frank Mulrennan of the Regional Newspapers and Printers Association. The council is chaired by Professor Tom Mitchell, former provost of Trinity College Dublin.

Planning for the press council began while Delaney was chairing the Periodical Publishers of Ireland Association and she worked on bringing the magazine sector on board for the scheme. She stayed with the project and is now involved in helping set up the body. The first key task is to appoint a press ombudsman, and Delaney said he or she should be in place by October.

The press council is likely to deal mainly with newspaper issues, but it does have some relevance for magazines, Delaney said, particularly with regard to privacy laws. "The main argument was, it's this or a statutory body. In Britain, magazines are named in maybe 6 per cent of complaints."

Delaney said she was delighted to see the project getting off the ground. "Publishing is all about human resources – and that means mistakes can happen. It's very important to be able to apologise for those mistakes, which is why we're keen to see the Defamation Bill in place." It's "fantastic" she said, that anyone can make a complaint "without having to put his or her hand in the pocket".