

## Pain-free child care

SHEILA GHOSH AND NICOLE MILLS, FOUNDERS, WEEWUNZ

**N**ICOLE MILLS AND SHEILA GHOSH liken themselves to Aspirin for Australian corporations – they take the headache out of the problem of child-care provision. The pair founded their business, WeeWunz, five years ago as an independent consultancy to provide child-care advice and brokerage to big companies.

Like many businesses, WeeWunz was borne out of necessity. In this case, it was a conundrum faced by many parents: child care. Mills, far right, and Ghosh have six children between them. “Neither of us could get child care for our children,” Mills says. “There [was a] two-to-three-year waiting list.”

Ghosh adds: “We felt there was a definite mismatch between what was needed in the corporate community and child care. We see ourselves as an interface.”

Mills says their market research found not all companies needed their own child-care facility, “but they still wanted solutions for their staff, some of which they were losing because the child-care equation was not being answered effectively. Corporates were all saying they didn’t know where to begin. Within their businesses they didn’t have anyone with a child-care background, so they didn’t know where to start.”

Oddly enough, neither Mills nor Ghosh had a background in child care. Mills had been a project manager in information technology and banking, including Rabobank and GIO. Ghosh had been a project manager for broadcast companies. “We came from corporate backgrounds ourselves,” Ghosh says, adding that seeking child-care qualifications themselves “would have taken our eye off the ball”.

WeeWunz now has eight staff, including part-timers. Not all are child-care experts – they have legal expertise, administration and accounting staff, and a registered nurse.

The company’s business model is not to be a child-care operator itself, but to sit between the operators and corporations to facilitate child-care provision. WeeWunz consults to both sides – to corporations about the child-care needs of staff and to new child-care operators about policy. The consultancy is not tied exclusively to any one child-care operator.

Ghosh and Mills hope to grow WeeWunz this year through new services such as “satellite centres” (dedicated child-care facilities that are not physically located on a company’s premises) and “back-up care” (a stand-by system for situations where last-minute or emergency child care is required).

The next staff appointments for WeeWunz will be more child-care consultants as well as business developers. However, Mills and Ghosh are cautious about expanding WeeWunz too quickly. “In 2007 it will be corporates coming to us rather than us knocking on their door,” Mills says. “We see long-term relationships with companies as they change. The quality of our service and meeting our promises are two priorities for our business.”

CHRIS LARSEN

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