

Self-made woman behind Ross brand

Julia Ross, group managing director of Ross Human Directions, is reputedly Australia's richest self-made businesswoman and undoubtedly one of the most celebrated and colourful women personalities in business.

By her own admission, Ross took an unconventional route to become one of Australia's leading business people in recruitment, having earned her first managerial role during a ten-year stint in the construction industry.

As the youngest-ever chief executive for a division of the Taylor Woodrow group, her appointment in 1976 saw Ross become a finalist in the prestigious Businesswoman of the Year.

In 1982, Ross began her extraordinary career in the recruitment industry through her appointment as the manager of 15 branches of the leading multinational employment agency Thames Valley, in Britain. In 1984, she relocated to Australia to manage the establishment of the Asia-Pacific operations of the company and was promoted in 1986 to the director of Australia and New Zealand with responsibility for managing operations in the Asian, Australian and New Zealand regions.

In 1988, Ross founded and became managing director of Julia Ross Recruitment, a company that specialised in recruitment and capitalised on a growing pink collar temporary contractor niche in the market.

Julia Ross Recruitment listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in September 2000, becoming the only female-owned business and the largest sole-owner business ever to list.

Julia Ross Recruitment was regarded as a pioneer in the recruitment industry and continued to grow. In December 2003, the company name



Julia Ross, group managing director of Ross Human Directions

was changed to Ross Human Directions to reflect the evolution of the business, diversification of services and the changing nature of the employee-employer relationship – referred to as the ‘human direction’ of the business.

In June 2004 Ross doubled the size of Ross Human Directions with the acquisition of Spherion Group in Asia Pacific. This is the most notable acquisition by Ross Human Directions to date. Not only did it broaden the geographical span of the busi-

ness, it significantly enhanced its service offerings and doubled the organisation's revenue to approximately \$350 million a year.

Ross describes the Australian recruitment industry as having, “high service levels, particularly for the level of returns. Most organisations now operate professionally. The industry is still growing and is anticipated to continue to do so, so long as our economy stays robust”.

With offices dotted around the globe, it was almost inevi-

table that Julia Ross would open an office in Dublin, which she did in 2004.

Julia Ross Recruitment, Ireland has offices in Harcourt Street, Dublin 2. The reason behind the opening of the Irish office was personal.

“We had a long-term employee who was from Dublin and was an exceptional person to start this office. That, combined with what we believe is a very strong economy moving forward, is what influenced our decision,” said Ross.