

PPC helps independent retailers to keep up with the Joneses and Myers

One Brisbane retailer is making the effort to keep up with the Joneses (giant retailer David Jones that is) by introducing a plastic gift and loyalty "Smart" card system into it's newly opened operation.

With more than 20 years of successful retailing experience behind her, Karen Harley knows a thing or two about what makes a small independent competitive in the cut throat world of retailing.

Karen Harley owns and operates Living Silk, a boutique homewares and accessories store located at Latrobe Terrace in Brisbane's trendy inner-city suburban Paddington.

Living Silk is a retail operation that specialises in the importation and selling of beautiful hand made silk merchandise from Cambodia.

The country is one of the world's renowned high quality silk producing nations.

It is also well known however for the devastation caused by the former Pol Pot regime.

While on a trip to Cambodia in support of her daughter, who was working as an Australian Youth Ambassador, Harley was introduced to the Tabitha Foundation.

The Tabitha Foundation works to improve the life of the people in Cambodia. By working through this organisation Karen's retailing activities help support and improve the Cambodian community at a grass roots level

In turning to business models Karen is adamant that small niche retail operators like herself are increasingly able to effectively compete with the big retail end of town through new technologies.

"Before coming out of retirement and opening Living Silk, I owned and operated for some twenty years a total of seven

Living and Giving retail Gift stores. Five of these were located in Brisbane & 2 in Singapore" said Karen.



"As a specialist retailer and operating in a variety of locations, we had a very high throughput of customers on a daily basis.

"One of the strategies that I implemented to help customers was a gift card voucher system."

Karen says that this was a helpful tool at the time.

"The gift card voucher we used in that business enabled us to secure business from people who were time pressed but in the market to buy a gift for friends or relatives," explained Karen.

"Rather than leave the store empty handed they were able to purchase a gift card voucher."

When Karen opened her new venture at Paddington she knew that she had to introduce some type of gift redemption scheme.

Naturally, Karen wanted to keep up with major retailing trends and adopt best practice methods as used by the major retailers.

"I realised that plastic Gift Cards and Loyalty Cards were being used by the majors. I decided that I would research the market to find out what was available for the single retailer market.

"I was aware through a colleague that PPC was launching a Retail Gift and Loyalty 'Smart' Card package at Shopex 2006 held last July.

"I went along to this trade fair and liked what I saw. The simplicity of the PPC system, the low set up and ongoing cost was what sold me."

According to Karen, PPC's Plastic Gift "Smart" Card system makes so much more sense because points accrued or redeemed are stored via the "Smart" chip on the card itself.

"The card not only conveniently stores the value of the gift amount on the card but it also captures valuable customer information through the contact 'Smart' chip on the card. It is like a portable database," she stated.

