

INTRODUCTION

AussieBum began as an Australian men's underwear manufacturer. In recent years, the company has expanded its product range to include other clothing lines such as swimwear, leisurewear and sportswear.



FIGURE 1.1 AussieBum has increased its product range over time.

AussieBum was established in 2001 by current director, Sean Ashby, who was unemployed at the time. He was looking for the style of swimwear he wore when he was growing up. He believed that he could make more 'traditional bathers' — the type he remembered wearing in his youth. All he needed were some samples to take to local department stores and other retail outlets and he would be in business.

Unfortunately, the samples proved to be a disappointment — not to Ashby but to the retailers and department stores that he approached. The biggest criticism was that the fabric Ashby used was no longer what swimmers wanted — it was to be Lycra or nothing. Ashby was not to be deterred, and with the help of friends he decided to try a unique approach.

Starting with a website and a photo shoot at Bondi beach, Ashby sent a press release and a sample of the product to major magazines around the world. Although the response was not overwhelming, orders slowly came in from around the world. At this stage orders were not arriving daily but, with enough to keep the business going, Ashby was able to grow the business. By 2007 the business was shipping more than 1000 orders a day to numerous destinations around the world.

Ashby began operating the business out of a suburban lounge room in Sydney. He was joined after two years by Guyon Holland. Together, Ashby and Holland broke most of the 'traditional rules' when they started their business: they had very little start-up capital; they had no experience in the fashion industry or in operating a manufacturing business; they began exporting before they had established a solid customer base within Australia; and they did all this using e-commerce at a time when the dotcom boom was seemingly over.

Since it commenced operations, AussieBum has managed to achieve 15–20 per cent growth in their sales and profit every quarter since 2001. The \$20000 start-up capital resulted in a turnover of just \$30000 in the first year of operation, but with the company doubling in size almost every year since it was founded, turnover in 2007 was in excess of \$10 million. This multi-million dollar global company now employs over 35 people and produces over 150 different product lines.



FIGURE 1.2 AussieBum's headquarters remain in Leichhardt, New South Wales, which is important as all manufacturing is conducted in Australia.

STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES

After 10 years of operation AussieBum maintains a very flat organisational structure. As a result of the way the company has grown, many of the staff are required to multi-task. Generally staff are not employed to fulfil one specific role, but must be flexible enough to cover several different roles. As the company continues to grow, it is inevitable that more layers of management will be required.

Despite the growth in product lines, sales and revenue, Ashby and Holland have remained in control of the business, and AussieBum is still operating as a private company.

Their strategy has been one of evolution — beginning as as a single-person entity, then growing and seizing any new opportunity that presented itself. Once a new venture was undertaken or an opportunity was seized, the company would undergo a period of consolidation before moving onto the next opportunity. It could be described, therefore, as an unplanned strategy because the opportunities may not always be planned or easily identifiable.

- 1 Why did Sean Ashby establish AussieBum in 2001?
- 2 Outline the reasons why starting AussieBum was so risky.
- 3 Why were traditional methods of sales unavailable to Ashby?
- **4** (a) Outline reasons why AussieBum might choose to maintain a flat organisational structure.
 - (b) Why might it be likely that more layers of management will be required as the company grows?
- **5** What is meant by a strategy of evolution?
- **6** AussieBum is a private company. Outline the features of a private company and highlight the advantages of this structure over public ownership.



OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

Operations management involves overseeing the design, creation and management of the processes required to transform inputs into outputs. The operations system utilised by AussieBum is unique, offering some features not traditionally found in manufacturing businesses.

Operations processes

AussieBum has steadfastly continued to manufacture in Australia even though a major competitor in Pacific Brands (manufacturer of Bonds products) found costs of manufacturing in Australia prohibitive and moved offshore.

Part of the reason for manufacturing in Australia stems from the way the company developed. Starting off small, it was prohibitive in terms of cost to manufacture overseas as those manufacturers were unwilling to produce the small quantities required. So AussieBum manufactured here and has since recognised the benefits in continuing to manufacture in Australia. These benefits include:

- local knowledge of suppliers and conditions
- good relationships with suppliers
- positive public image.

This is the area in which Guyon Holland excelled — he was brought in by Ashby because of his expertise in the area and has been able to streamline the systems and technologies that allow AussieBum to be competitive despite a relatively poor textiles industry in Australia.

A sound inventory control system and good partnerships with local manufacturers means production lines are able to be quickly diverted to change the style, size and/or colour of the items being produced so that orders can be filled within a couple of days. An example provided by Guyon Holland is a product line that went from design to sample to customer within 7 days.

This sort of situation would not be possible if the products were produced overseas in countries such as China — it would be more difficult to monitor the manufacturing process due to distance; time would be lost in shipping products to Australia and then back out to the customer; and additional costs would be incurred in warehousing the products in Australia before final shipment.

Operations strategies — new product design

A key component of the operations processes is the design phase. This component is primarily managed by Sean Ashby, the principal co-director of the business and, in the early years, the principal designer. As the business has grown, the design phase has changed to be more of a collaboration between Ashby and other staff, as well as a more structured process. This is seen as a feature that differentiates AussieBum from other manufacturers.



FIGURE 2.1 AussieBum uses a variety of fabrics in their product lines.

The design phase drives the management of materials. AussieBum designs a product and then determine the most appropriate material for that product. In some instances suppliers will first present a fabric to AussieBum and the designers will produce a range with that fabric in mind.

Operations strategies — quality management

Another aspect of operations processes is the management of quality, especially the strategies put in place to manage quality and reduce defects and costs. AussieBum, as with many aspects of its operations, adopts a less-than-conventional approach to quality.

Quality is assessed through the business's ability to touch, feel and see its products before they get into the hands of customers. At any stage during the process of development, design, creation and sampling, a product can be withdrawn because it won't work or meet the standards expected by the business. Some products will see multiple samples produced and tested to ensure the most appropriate design, colour and shape is selected for production. If a product passes this stage it is then taken to a photo shoot. This allows the business to see the product 'in action' and gives a degree of control over the quality of the product.



FIGURE 2.2 Inside the AussieBum office

Case study questions

- 1 Outline the operations process as it applies to AussieBum.
- 2 Explain the benefits to AussieBum of continuing to manufacture in Australia.
- **3** An operations management strategy is to manage quality. Discuss how the management of quality can impact upon the performance of a business.
- **4** Describe the quality management strategy employed by AussieBum.

Exports

By default AussieBum is an exporter. The lack of opportunities to sell through local retail outlets forced AussieBum to sell online. The growth of technology and online shopping, the improvement in security for internet sales and improved transport networks has allowed AussieBum to sell its products overseas.

The demand for the AussieBum brand overseas has lead to contracts to supply retail stores overseas so the products are available through the 'traditional' means as well as still being available online.

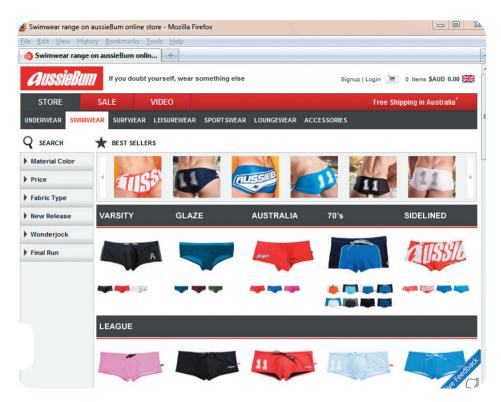


FIGURE 2.3 The AussieBum online store

As an exporter AussieBum has achieved considerable success. This success culminated in its being named *Small to Medium Manufacturer of the Year* at the 2009 Australian Export Awards.

Retail outlet expansion

The initial rejection by local retailers and department stores in Australia made Sean Ashby reluctant to allow his product to be sold through retail outlets in Australia once the local stores realised what they had missed out on by rejecting AussieBum in the early years of the business. For years, Ashby admitted to having a 'huge chip on my shoulder' in terms of selling through retail outlets. In 2007, in response to a question as to whether or not he could ever see a day when his products would be sold at local department stores, he responded with, 'Absolutely not! I'll build a store right next door instead.'

However, the practice of not selling through retail outlets has applied only in Australia. As discussed previously, AussieBum has developed relationships with some of the biggest retailers in the world, and it is these retailers that account for a large percentage of the export sales made by the business. As exports account for 90 per cent of all AussieBum product sales, the sales through overseas retail outlets are vital to the success of the brand. For example, AussieBum sells through KaDeWe in Germany and Selfridges in the United Kingdom, which are both retail giants spreading the AussieBum brand around the world. The decision to sell through these retail outlets was not easy. Ashby originally baulked at the idea as he was expected to pay a premium for the privilege, something that would increase the price of the products as the retailers took their cut. AussieBum continued to trade only online until the retail giants had no choice but to do it the AussieBum way.

Corporate social responsibility

The concept of being a good corporate citizen is not new and AussieBum is no stranger to the concept of corporate social responsibility. There are a number of ways that AussieBum ensures its good corporate citizenship.

AussieBum manufactures all of its products within Australia. While some materials are sourced from overseas, AussieBum uses only the best fabrics and is prepared to pay more for these fabrics. The business is less concerned about the impact on prices than it is about providing a quality product that customers have no complaints about. Having resisted the

common temptation of shifting manufacturing overseas where workers are paid less and work in less than ideal conditions, AussieBum is committed to providing jobs in Australia and being 'hands-on' in the production and quality control aspects of the business.

Other aspects of its good corporate citizenship include:

- support for local life-saving clubs through sponsorship of individual life boat crews
- sponsorship of the AussieBum Queensland Cup surf boat competition in Mooloolaba
- involvement in youth programs in the Blacktown area of Sydney. This involvement developed through Ashby's participation in the Channel 9 show *The Secret Millionaire*.
- Development of eco-friendly product materials such as Micro Modal beechwood and bamboo fibre based fabrics, as well as a range of underwear comprising 27 per cent banana fibre. This is recycling at its best as the weave comes from the bark for the tree that is normally discarded when the fruit is harvested.



FIGURE 2.4 Some of AussieBum's products use recycled banana fibre as part of their manufacturing.

- 1 Outline the role that globalisation and technology have played in allowing AussieBum to export their products.
- 2 Define corporate social responsibility (CSR).
- 3 Explain how AussieBum demonstrates CSR.
- 4 Explain why CSR is 'good for business'.
- **5** Discuss the ways in which AussieBum's use of natural fibres may impact upon sustainability.
- **6** Explain how AussieBum's decision to continue manufacturing in Australia will benefit other Australians.



MARKETING

Marketing is a system of linked activities and strategies that aim to plan, price, promote and place products to customers. These customers are current customers of the business and potential customers. Marketing managers should continually ask, 'What do customers want to buy — now and in the future?' Marketing managers should be finding out what customers want and then attempting to satisfy those wants.

AussieBum is now a global brand designed for the youth market, and it uses the communication tools of today's male youth to promote and sell its product. Therefore, it should be asking, 'What does the male youth want in terms of underwear — today and in the future?'

As a result of its focus on today's youth, AussieBum marketing has concentrated on today's young people and their lifestyles. The company does not employ sales representatives; instead, it relies on its website for sales, as well as blogs and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace for advertising.

The business continues to evolve as it grows, and this applies to its marketing strategy. Since beginning in 2001, AussieBum has grown to produce over 150 different styles of products related to men's underwear and swimwear. All of AussieBum's marketing strategies reinforce the brand.

AussieBum's target markets can be categorised as follows:

- primary market young males engaged in water-based activities such as swimming and surfing. This market is product-focused.
- secondary market young males who want to look 'cool', wearing trendy underwear and accessories items such as belts, beanies and towels.



FIGURE 3.1 An example of AussieBum marketing

Competitors

AussieBum's major competitor in the men's underwear industry had been Pacific Brands and their Bonds range of apparel. However, Bonds suffered a decline in credibility when Pacific Brands sacked 1850 workers and moved its operations to China in 2009.

Ripcurl and Quiksilver continue to be major competitors in the swimwear market. However, as Quiksilver has moved out of Australia and is now US owned and based, they have lost some credibility and appeal in the Australian market.

Local department stores such as Myer, Target and Kmart retail underwear and swimwear for the market segments seeking lower prices, and they are also able to cater for women as well as people of all ages.

Internationally, AussieBum products are competing with internationally recognised brands such as Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana.

Marketing strategies

Product

- AussieBum has around 150 product lines available for sale through its online store.
 AussieBum's product lines include male swimwear, underwear, leisurewear, sportswear, belts, beanies and towels.
- The key items in the product range are the traditional and classically styled *Aussie cossie*, reminiscent of the style of swimwear worn in the 1970s and 1980s.
- The use of colour in the product range is also an important feature. According to co-director Guyon Holland, retailers credit AussieBum with leading the way in men's underwear design, particularly in colour, which other manufacturers have followed.

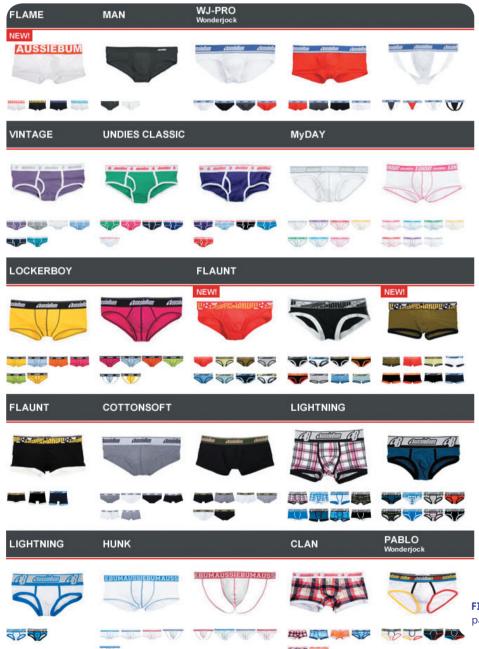


FIGURE 3.2 Colour is an important part of the AussieBum product.



FIGURE 3.3 The AussieBum *Flame* range

- Technology plays a key role in the design, manufacturing and marketing of new products. AussieBum is proud of its use of the latest fibres and polymers, such as the Micro Modal beechwood and bamboo fibre based fabrics for some underwear styles. They have also begun using a new eco-friendly banana range of underwear, incorporating 27 per cent banana fibre, 64 percent cotton and 9 percent Lycra. The banana fibre used in the underwear is made from a bark weave from the banana plant and makes the underwear not only lightweight but also very absorbent.
- Other major AussieBum products include:
 - Essence. This is a range of underwear where the fabric is infused with vitamins that are released into the skin.
 - Wonderjock. This product line uses the iconic Wonderbra as its inspiration in development and marketing. It has been developed to enhance the appearance of the male genitalia through the use of a fabric cup. In 2007, this line was renamed the Boosterjock and was introduced into the swimwear range.
 - Flame. This is a 2011 men's underwear range.
- special occasion underwear such as ranges developed for Valentine's Day
- Classic, Storm and Loose, which are swimwear lines.

Price

- AussieBum recognises that manufacturing in Australia has its costs as well as its benefits.
 The primary cost to AussieBum is that the products are less affordable than if the production was outsourced overseas.
- Hence, AussieBum do not aim to compete on price but on quality and therefore 'value for money'. AussieBum believe their quality in relation to their price is responsible for its 40–60 per cent re-buy; that is, customers who buy a product and then return at a later date and purchase another product.

Promotion

AussieBum is considered one of the leading brands of men's underwear and swimwear in Australia and has become a worldwide brand. A range of successful strategies, relevant to its target markets, are used to communicate and promote the range of products marketed by AussieBum.

- AussieBum uses a branding strategy that targets particular areas of interest for males, as well as providing a 'base' range for a consistent image.
- AussieBum uses iconic images to promote its products, such as the famous *Shearing the Rams* painting.
- AussieBum is quick to promote well-known persons and celebrities who use their products. Ewan McGregor, Billy Connelly and Daniel Radcliffe have all spoken of their liking for the products, and Kylie Minogue has used male dancers wearing AussieBum underwear in a video clip for one of her songs.
- All advertising online utilises iconic Australian images. Photo shoots at Bondi beach are common and lifesavers feature heavily in promotional materials.



FIGURE 3.4 The AussieBum brand is aligned with surfing culture.

- Sponsoring of major surf competitions and events to promote AussieBum. These include:
 - support for local lifesaving clubs through sponsorship of individual life boat crews
 - sponsorship of the AussieBum Queensland Cup surf boat competition in Mooloolaba
- AussieBum developed a specific range of underwear known as the *Ipswich* named after a Queensland town devastated by floods in 2011. Part of the selling price of these products went to the Flood Relief charities set up in the wake of those floods.

Place/distribution

AussieBum began using a simple distribution strategy — products were available only online and orders were shipped the next day. As the brand and the business have grown, the company has had to evolve and change how and where the products are distributed.



FIGURE 3.5 The AussieBum distribution centre

Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have allowed the brand to develop a strong following. These venues have led to AussieBum being the seventh most popular search term in Australia in 2008, according to the New York Times.

While the product was snubbed by Australian retailers, the company did not meet the same resistance internationally. The company now retails in Selfridges, Harrods and the House of Fraser in the United Kingdom, Universal Gear in New York, KaDeWe in Berlin and Harvey Nicholls in Dubai. The products are also available through ASOS.com, the United Kingdom's largest online fashion retailer.

AussieBum itself recognises the importance of the internet in its marketing and sales strategy — it now provides 13 different languages on its website and online store.

Case study questions

- 1 Define *marketing* and outline its importance to a business.
- 2 Identify and describe the main target market for AussieBum products.
- 3 Identify and evaluate four major AussieBum marketing strategies.
- **4** Explain how marketing strategies may need to be modified in different countries.
- **5** Discuss three major issues that may arise in selling through so many overseas outlets.
- **6** Explain how technology is being used by AussieBum to attract customers and market products.
- 7 Evaluate the importance of online marketing for a company like AussieBum.
- **8** AussieBum operates a few boutiques around the country, including in the international airport in Sydney. Explain how these retail outlets link to the overall marketing strategy of the business.
- **9** Use the table below to complete a SWOT analysis for AussieBum's sales and marketing strategy.

Internal strengths	Internal weaknesses
External opportunities	External threats

10 Visit AussieBum's online store and evaluate its performance as the company's main method of distribution in Australia.



FINANCE

Access to finance is a critical issue facing any company, regardless of whether they are just starting, looking to expand locally or into global markets, or are just keeping the business operating until the company is stable enough to operate independently.

AussieBum has remained a private company and is operated by co-directors Sean Ashby and Guyon Holland. As a private company, they are not obliged to report financial details or profit outcomes. However, the following information regarding the financial performance of AussieBum is available:

- commenced operations with a start-up capital of \$20 000, which was solely contributed by Sean Ashby
- turnover achieved in the first year was \$30 000
- grew by 15–20 per cent per quarter for the first 5 years
- in April 2008, five different sizes over a range of 300 styles led to 7000 orders per week
- turnover achieved in 2007 was in excess of \$10 million. It was expected to hit \$22 million in 2008–09.
- sales occurred in 75 countries in 2007, expanding to 120 countries in 2009
- 90 per cent of sales were achieved internationally.

 Major financial influences on sales, revenues and profits for AussieBum include the following:
- the global financial crisis saw demand for products decrease worldwide
- the strong current value of the Australian dollar increases the price of AussieBum products for international clients
- maintaining manufacturing in Australia places continued pressure on costs so the business can remain competitive
- sourcing fabrics that maintain quality but don't substantially add to costs
- fluctuations in the exchange rate. An appreciation of the Australian dollar reduces tourism from overseas.
- increased competition from overseas manufacturers. The high Australian dollar combined with lower costs places increasing pressure on AussieBum's ability to maintain prices at their current level.

Financial management strategies

Financial management strategies focus on recognising the sensitivity of customers to changes in prices, exclusivity of brands given to retailers, the split between fixed and variable costs, and the costs passed on by local suppliers and producers.

Price sensitivity of customers (cash flow management)

AussieBum considers the price sensitivity of its customers but recognises that there are three key issues to consider when pricing products:

- costs as determined by suppliers and internal factors
- the degree of differentiation offered by AussieBum through high-level design, research and development.
- the value customers feel they are receiving from the product not only in terms of value for money but in terms of the lifestyle and 'community' they are buying into.



FIGURE 4.1 AussieBum profit from a positive representation of the Australian lifestyle.

Brand exclusivity (working capital management)

AussieBum licenses some international retailers to sell its products through their stores. By allowing only certain retailers to sell the products (exclusivity), AussieBum is able to demand payment prior to delivery and can control the price.

Fixed and variable costs

AussieBum is not typical in its cost structure. Fixed and variable costs are determined by a product line, rather than considering the range of products as a whole. AussieBum will first look at an idea, develop the idea and then produce a sample. It is at this point that costs are considered from a finished product point of view.

Local supply costs

AussieBum aims to have a collaborative relationship with its suppliers. This allows the company to be able to 'step in' and inform local producers when production has deviated from design or plans. This assists in keeping costs down through minimising waste and faulty products.

This approach also benefits the supplier. Meeting deadlines, quality standards and cost budgets means the products are able to be marketed quickly, sales occur and the supplier is offered further contracts — their business grows as well.

Performance review

A final strategy adopted by Ashby and Holland is to constantly review their performance. Each quarter they reassess the business plan, financial strategies, product lines and marketing. This allows them to keep on top of their business and avoid errors or decisions that may adversely affect the company.

Credit risk

Credit risk represents the risk to AussieBum of a customer initiating a transaction and then failing to complete that transaction through insufficient credit or fraud. AussieBum is exposed to credit risk through the use of online shopping — the majority of its sales are made online using credit card facilities.

The risk of credit fraud is minimised by AussieBum through the use of PayPal. PayPal is a system that makes it safer to make and accept payments online. The system remembers and safeguards a customer's BSB and account numbers, as well as credit and debit card numbers, so that the customer does not have to type these

details each time they buy online. PayPal also offers an additional layer of security for AussieBum through easy processes for dealing with fraudulent activities.

Finally, a philosophy held by Ashby and Holland is to grow with your assets. They avoid borrowing money and are currently operating debt-free. This allows them to grow slowly, consider all options and possibilities, and not get ahead of themselves.



FIGURE 4.2 AussieBum has many safeguards against credit fraud.

- 1 AussieBum commenced operations with a start-up capital of \$20,000, which was contributed solely by Sean Ashby. List the advantages and disadvantages of this financial strategy.
- 2 With 90 per cent of its sales achieved overseas, explain the financial challenges that AussieBum faces.
- **3** Explain what is meant by cost management. In your answer, distinguish between the fixed and variable costs for a business such as AussieBum.
- **4** Discuss how AussieBum manages local supplier costs.
- **5** (a) List and explain the major risks faced by AussieBum.
 - (b) For each risk suggest controls that could be implemented by AussieBum to minimise the negative impact of these risks.
- **6** Explain how brand exclusivity operates and how it can assist AussieBum to control prices.
- 7 Outline the advantages of AussieBum's debt-free status.



HUMAN RESOURCES

AussieBum began with just one employee — current Co-director Sean Ashby. Relying on help from friends, he created a range of swimwear samples that he tried to interest major retailers into selling. This approach was not met with success so Ashby went forward by himself, again relying on friends to assist — this time with a photo shoot and mailing of advertisements and samples to major magazines.

Once the company found a foothold in the market and began to grow, the company was able to employ more staff. Co-director Guyon Holland joined the company in 2003 and at present there are 35 employees.

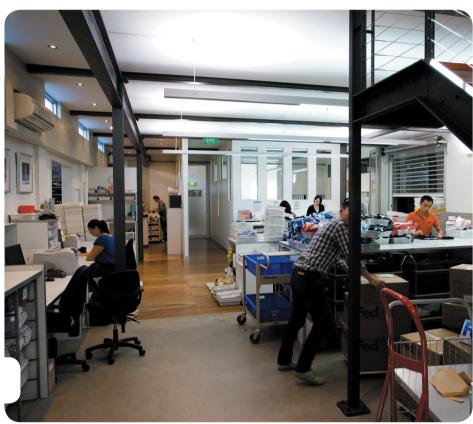


FIGURE 5.1 Employees working in the AussieBum office

The company prides itself on the collaborative nature of all the processes involved in the production of the merchandise. Combined with the lack of a formal management structure, staff are encouraged to be generalists rather than specialists — although each employee has greater strengths in certain areas.

Strategies in HRM

A key strategy used at AussieBum in relation to its staff is to treat employees fairly and ethically. The business provides a separate area for staff to relax away from 'the job'. One level of the building houses a fully equipped kitchen, a lounge area equipped with Foxtel, a gymnasium, a 'chill-out' room and a barbecue on the balcony. These features assist staff to cope with working long hours, which are due to the international nature of the business.

An additional strategy undertaken by Ashby and Holland was to enter the company into the Australian Export Awards. Winning an award is seen as a reward and validation of the work undertaken by the staff.

Employee spotlight

Name: Nevan Lalich Job title: Graphic Designer

Job summary: Nevan has worked in the graphics department at AussieBum for over nine years. He now coordinates all of the graphic design artwork while working closely with co-director Sean Ashby on all marketing and promotions activities and events.

Nevan also manages the AussieBum online presence, regularly releasing new product lines, translating artworks and providing materials for all of the social media tools used by the company.



FIGURE 5.2 Nevan Lalich

On top of his graphic design and photography work, Nevan works with the production team on the print designs of many AussieBum products, including boardies, swimwear and underwear.

Nevan is truly a 'generalist' in the AussieBum team.

- 1 Explain the relationship between human resource management and organisational objectives.
- 2 Explain what is meant by being a 'generalist'.
- **3** AussieBum is proud of its collaborative approach to all production processes. Describe the leadership style likely to be adopted by AussieBum managers and outline the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.
- **4** Explain how ethics and social responsibility issues may affect human resource management.
- 5 Employing generalists rather than specialists may make it difficult to determine remuneration packages for employees. Explain what this means and outline the challenges for AussieBum in this area.
- **6** Design a hypothetical job advertisement for an employee at AussieBum.
- **7** Explain how training and development would play an important role in human resource management at AussieBum.



MAJOR PROJECT

AussieBum business report

AussieBum has hired you as a consultant to assist them as they endeavour to introduce a women's product range. You must produce a report that covers the following areas:

- outline the role of quality management in operations and production
- assess the funding options available for business expansion
- explain how the business should exhibit corporate responsibility in human resource management
- evaluate and provide recommendations on a range of strategies to market the new product range.



FIGURE 6.1 AussieBum logo



FIGURE 6.2 Marketing strategies are important when releasing a new product range.

In your answer, you will be assessed on how well you:

- use your knowledge and the information available
- communicate using relevant business terminology and concepts
- present a logical, well structured answer to the question in the form of a business report.