

Wise Words with Catherine Nielsen



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When we covered [Handpresso](#) back in April of last year it proved to be an immensely popular innovation. After all, the prospect of fresh coffee while braving the morning traffic is an appealing one and this was a modern convenience that the founders recognized had value. Handpresso is a mini espresso machine exclusively for use in a car.

When we got in touch with the Handpresso team we were saddened to hear that the founder, Henrik Jul Nielsen, had passed away. Henrik's wife, Catherine, was determined to keep her husband's project thriving and she now heads up the company. It has obviously been a difficult time for Henrik's

colleagues and family, but Catherine now has a whole host of plans for the future to honor her husband's memory.

Catherine started out her career as a translator for big business, and worked on major projects including the Channel Tunnel opening. She joined Handpresso as Communications Manager and soon became so engrossed that she decided to leave her translation career and dedicate herself to the startup. We got in touch with her to find out how Handpresso has been coming along under her leadership.

1. Where did the idea for Handpresso come from?

Henrik Nielsen, Handpresso's creator, was an espresso-addict and travelled a lot. Fed up with bad espressos, even in exclusive hotels abroad, he started thinking of a portable espresso machine he could bring anywhere – slightly larger than a Swiss army knife. As he had worked in the small appliance area, he had noticed that espresso machines were increasingly sophisticated and expensive. He chose the opposite way and looked for simplicity. The company's motto has always been Leonardo da Vinci's 'Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication'. This was applied to the Handpresso Wild to make the simplest espresso machine ever.

2. Can you describe a typical working day?

I work very closely with my CEO. We have daily meetings, either to discuss major issues or to update each other briefly. Besides being the President of the company, I work on communications, call journalists, check what has been published, post on Facebook and our website and make new product descriptions or press releases if needed...



3. How do you unwind or relax when you're not working on Handpresso?

Family, friends, ballet classes, reading, cycling in the forest or going to Paris.

4. What's the secret ingredient to success as an entrepreneur?

Passion combined with determination.

5. What difficulties have you faced in building your business?

Launching breakthrough innovations is not an easy task. You need to convince people that the machines really work, that they are designed by genuine high-end engineers, that the espresso is as good as with a traditional expensive espresso machine and that using them saves the planet... You have to communicate a lot to make people confident about such a new brand and product.

6. What motivates you to keep going?

I had joined Henrik and his Handpresso team in 2007 to help them with communications. I started on a part-time basis but got so engrossed with it that I ended up totally dropping my own translation activity. As of 2008, I only worked for Handpresso. Henrik and I were both very excited about the product and the company, and in late 2011 two new products were ready for launch when Henrik died. I decided to keep going for his memory, but also for us all – his family and team. The whole team decided to back me up and we've done a very good job.

7. Where do you see your business in five years, and how will you get there?

Last year, we signed a crucial agreement with Lavazza entailing the design of a machine for them, another for FIAT and a third one for an IVECO truck model. All of them work with LavazzaAModoMio capsules, compared to our Handpresso Auto which uses ESE pods. But the technology is the same. We are working on other partnerships with big international companies and hope to sign around two new ones per year. This is our objective for the present and future. Besides this, we are already sold in 40 countries but open up new countries regularly and would like to be represented even more, even in the countries where we are already. I'll try to work on that communications-wise.



8. How have you found the transition period since taking over the business?

The transition period has been hard personally, but it helped me a lot to work with such a dynamic and enthusiastic team.

9. What does the future hold for Handpresso and the team?

An exciting future!

10. Any final words for aspiring entrepreneurs?

Go ahead, running a business is a challenge but it's very, very exciting too!

Thanks Catherine!

You can read more about Handpresso [here](#), or visit the Handpresso site [here](#).