

# More sparkle for your rand and pound

Knowledge. Credibility. Quality. Credentials.

These are the qualities that have steered the success of [www.girlsbestfriend.co.za](http://www.girlsbestfriend.co.za) - an online diamond ring studio headed by lawyer turned entrepreneur, Wilna van Straten.

In collaboration with her partner, Brandon Topham, a chartered accountant and attorney, Wilna van Straten has grown their South African-based online venture into an international online business.

This year they are opening an online service desk in the United Kingdom and their pledge 'more designer-made sparkle for your rand' has rapidly expanded to 'more designer-made sparkle for your pound'.

"One of the secrets to our success is that we are an entirely online business, as opposed to a traditional business with an online presence," explains Van Straten from their home office in Waterkloof Ridge, Pretoria.

"Because we do not have any of the overheads of retail studios and stores, we are able to offer our clients superlative, certified, designer-made diamond rings at 30-60% less than the price that they would pay in-store. We also pride ourselves on our credibility and knowledge about diamonds, and this comes across when clients contact us."

Word of mouth has been their strongest form of advertising, and prospective clients always pick up the phone to find out more after looking at the site.

"No matter how sophisticated or electronic the world might be, people still want personal service and personal contact," Van Straten explains. "They want to know they can pick up the phone and that we are at the end of the line. This is one of the reasons why we are establishing a presence in the UK."

Girl's Best Friend

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Member of the Jewellery Council of South Africa

The United Kingdom and Europe currently make up the largest percentage of their international market.

The *Girls Best Friend* team backs up their credibility and knowledge with the necessary certificates and diamond identity documents from internationally accredited diamond certification laboratories, such as the European Gemological Laboratory. They are also members of the South African Jewellery Council.

They source their diamonds from the most reputable suppliers of quality diamonds, and all the designers and manufacturers on their books are specialists in their field. If, for example, a client wants a platinum or palladium diamond ring, they commission designers who specialise in these metals.

"Our business is established on the premise that no matter where in the world you are located, we can give you what you want and offer you the best that money can buy," says Van Straten. "Our aim is to become one of the world's major suppliers of diamond rings."

Apart from the aesthetic and emotional marketability of diamonds, another reason their business has boomed is because diamonds are highly regarded investment stones.

"Diamonds are linked to the dollar and historically have done extremely well," Topham explains.

For this reason unset diamonds are a sought after, secure alternate investment, particularly in an unstable global economic climate. Investments aside, people always find money for diamond rings because they are the international symbol of love.

"The beauty of our business is that our clients can buy their dream ring at an affordable price," says Van Straten.

She cites a recent case of a young man with a relatively modest income who approached her wanting to purchase an engagement ring.

"He explained that the young woman he wanted to marry is from a very wealthy family and he was concerned his budget would let the family down. I am happy to say he was extremely satisfied with the ring we designed for him and his fiancée's family was suitably impressed!"

Van Straten has a special rapport with all her clients and derives great personal satisfaction from these relationships.

"Business is all about good relationships," she says. "Good relationships engender credibility and credibility engenders trust. So go ahead and trust us to create your dream ring." ▲