

The Telegraph

Meet the woman urging us to invest in our sex lives

Yes Yes Yes Products, the home of organic sexual lubricants, celebrates its 10th anniversary this month. In her latest Biz Idol, Emma Sinclair interviews co-founder Susi Lennox, on why there's a business in making women go natural when it comes to lubes.



The company name Yes Yes Yes sounds like something out of *When Harry met Sally* – cheap thrills and fun and games – but it's actually pretty down to earth. It sells natural, organic sex lubricants and moisturisers, which are effective and free of all known "mucosal" irritants. Most importantly, they are safe compared to some other perfume-filled, flavoured lubricants on the market. (Did you know some can actually kill sperm?)

With Yes Yes Yes, here is a product that does exactly what it says on the tin. It doesn't apologise or sensationalise. It performs its job but has no smell, taste or colour to speak of – so it's ideal for people for whom discretion is key.

What women often don't understand is that the outer skin has a protective surface to it (stratum corneum) whereas the mucosa (which lines sexual organs) does not have that barrier, so whatever you apply to it is much more readily absorbed. Women spend a fortune on face creams but can be very careless about what they apply to their more sensitive parts.

How did Yes Yes Yes come about?

Susi Lennox, co-founder of Yes Yes Yes, and her partner Sarah had experience of working in the drug safety divisions of major pharmaceutical companies. One part of the industry, called 'pharmacovigilance', deals with the risks to health and side effects from chemical ingredients, of

which there are many, so they were very aware of the health risks associated with certain synthetic, chemical ingredients. "When we looked at the sector we thought it was complacent, chemicalised and in need of reinvention," Susi told me. They set themselves the heady challenge of designing a range of intimacy products that would be completely benign, have no side effects, free of all known skin irritants and be highly effective.

What was the idea behind the range?

Susi's business partner was working for Pfizer when Viagra was launched, tracking the [side effects](#). In some extreme cases, men reported prolonged erections or dizziness. In some cases, sex had suddenly become physically uncomfortable for women. So they had an 'aha' moment.

Susi and Sarah looked at the lubricants on offer but found many of them used ingredients which were irritants. Many of the 'pleasure products' used fragrance and colour and artificial ingredients that you wouldn't want on your outer skin – let alone your inner skin – so they decided they would make intimacy products as free of side effects as they could possibly manage.

Susi's ambition was to revolutionise and dignify the category dominated by chemical compositions, glycerine or silicone based, often artificially coloured, flavoured and perfumed, with the potential to irritate the sensitive vaginal tract.

How was the start up funded?

The range took over three years to develop and patent. A friend made a poignant comment that stayed with Susi before she took the plunge to start the business. "When I drive to work in the morning, I leave most of myself in the glove compartment," he said. Susi didn't want to take her edited self into the workplace, she wanted to bring her whole self to work. So she sold her house to fund the research and development work (as did Sarah). Susi's three daughters had grown and flown before she embarked on Yes, so didn't need the security of a roof over their heads any more. She could take a risk.

Your business card says you are the alchemical director. What on earth does that mean?

"We try to be whimsical and humorous as well as smart," says Susi, explaining so that everyone has amusing job titles. Susi's partner Sarah is referred to as the head of tricky things (she is the head chemist), their customer service team are known as customer cherishers and the book keeper is the treasure measurer. Susi says she's the sorcerer's apprentice – part science, part business, part whatever else is left.

So is the name based on the infamous "yes yes yes" movie scene when Meg Ryan fakes an orgasm in a deli?

"Many people assume it comes from When Harry met Sally and I am of course happy with that association but no, it didn't," Susi told me. The last few lines of [Ulysses by James Joyce](#) are the real inspiration behind Yes. So it goes: "And I first put my arms around him, yes, and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts, all perfume, yes, and his heart was going like mad and yes, I said yes, I will Yes."

Dryness is not just a menopausal problem, is it?

Susi says the products are suitable for all sexually active people and that intimate dryness can happen to any woman at anytime for a myriad of reasons apart from menopause, such as being on the contraceptive pill, pregnancy, breast feeding, being on anti depressants or anti histamines or as the result of stress or cancer (not least because cancer treatment can often trigger the onset of menopause).

What has been your biggest achievement to date?

Susi is immensely proud that the Yes range remains unique in the market place. It is the only lubricant range in the world with a certified organic status. It is also the only product range that sits in both the organic and medical device category (meaning it is a preparation with proven health benefits). And winning the Women in Ethical Business award (WIBA) in 2009 when Yes was "up against huge competitors" – a David among Goliaths – is also something Susi is proud of.