

## ADRIENNE SARTORI

### Risk-taker

**Position:** Director

**Company:** Interfinanz

**Length of time in the position:** 4 years

**What's your vice?** "Champagne. It is traditionally used for celebrations and I think sometimes we race through life and forget that every day is a celebration."

**On the surface** ikebana, the centuries-old Japanese art of flower arrangement, doesn't appear to have much in common with foreign exchange hedging. But Adrienne Sartori will tell you otherwise.

Sartori is director of her own Melbourne-based company, Interfinanz, specialising in foreign exchange risk management. In her spare time, she studies and practises sogetsu, the most avant garde school of ikebana.

Founded by Sofu Teshigahara, sogetsu is very structured. "There are three elements and they all have to be positioned in a certain way," Sartori explains. She talks of the importance of angles, position and space, and how these basics must be followed before practitioners can experiment further. "It still has to encapsulate the three elements. But it's your own interpretation of what those three elements are and it's your interpretation of the materials that you're using and the containers that you're using to create the art form," she explains.

"If I then superimpose that onto financial markets: it's the organisation that you're dealing with, it's the entrepreneurial spirit that you're addressing and it's the three elements and how you put them together based on the current market conditions. Fundamentally, it's the same thing. It's just one is more volatile than the other."

Sartori loves volatility. She loves the 'wild ride' the market can sometimes be. She loves the fact that it means she can make money, literally, out of thin air. But she doesn't like losing, either for herself or her clients, which is why she has a three-part process she follows with every client:

risk management, profit enhancement and blue sky. "I have a skeleton system that has those three components [but] the proportion of those components and what's in each of them will be different for each client," she says.

The result is Sartori has enough satisfied clients that she doesn't really need to advertise, as reputation and word-of-mouth recommendations keep her books full. "My bread-and-butter clients are organisations with turnovers of 10 million dollars. I liken it to a bucket. If you have a hole in your bucket and you keep filling it up with water, which is your operational revenue, and the leak is the finance activity, you've got to plug the leak up first, right? And then you keep pouring the money in and it starts to overflow and that's fantastic. Imagine, you've got a client who's turning over \$10m, has no significant growth, say, and you can generate an extra 5 per cent return on your currency activities. That's \$500,000 a year. Over 10 years that's \$5m – and there's no significant capital outlay and there are no changes to your operation activity. As far as I can see, this is just the best kept secret in business."

With a grandfather, father and brother as accountants, and a Swiss heritage, Sartori jokes that she has green blood. "Or dollar signs. Or gold blood maybe?" she says with a laugh. Her mother, a *soinu* (or teacher of ikebana), stayed at home while Sartori was young.

A big part of her drive, she believes, comes from the way she was raised. She was exposed to opportunities, experiences and discussion; the word 'can't' was not used. "So you just assumed that if you try hard enough and you really want to succeed, you will, at whatever it is that

you do ... if you grow up assuming that you can do everything, well, you can."

After graduating from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1988, Sartori began working in the interest rate market. She worked for several major banks before the euro was introduced, so there "were lots of different economic conditions". Trading rooms were full of "really colourful characters" where there were lots of idiosyncrasies, shouting and energy. "My eyes were like saucers," she recalls. It hasn't always been easy, she admits. The learning curve has been steep at times, but it hasn't dampened her love of what she does and led to her starting Interfinanz in 2003.

"One of the things I really love about working for myself is that your business kind of represents who you are, in many regards. One of the first things that people often ask is 'what do you do?' and rather than define yourself by what you do, when you work for yourself, you can actually build your business to be about who you are. So from a values perspective and a beliefs perspective you can pour that into your business and people who are similar will work with you," she says. "The process I use to interact with my clients is fundamentally what I live and breathe."

