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## Money

### Around the world with the Stollmanns

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I thought I'd start the new year with a fascinating tale of an enterprising family whose business success allowed them to sail around the world, before deciding to make Australia their home. The seven-member Stollmann family originally hails from Europe. German-born Jost Stollmann and his Greek-born wife Fiona have five children and first called Australia home in October 2004.

Jost is a serial entrepreneur. Having founded the German system and network integrator CompuNet in 1984 and building it to a point at which it generated annual revenues of €1 billion, he sold the business to GE Capital in 1996. Not content merely with success in the private sector, after he sold CompuNet Jost became German Federal Shadow Minister for Economy and Technology in 1998, which he calls his "little excursion in politics" before embarking on his lap of the planet with his family in 2002.

"Given the age of our children we had a small window of opportunity to embark on our journey. We needed to leave before an age at which our eldest was too old to want to move and our youngest was too young to remember the journey. At the time we left our eldest child was 14 and our youngest was six," explains Jost.

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The family sailed around the world on a 754-day, 40,000 nautical mile voyage on a 130-foot yacht the Alithia, with a bunch of teachers, scientists and professional sailors in tow. They visited, among other places, the Galapagos Islands, Myanmar, the Seychelles, the Suez Canal and finally Athens for the Olympics. It wasn't their original plan to eventually return 'down under' to live, but the value system, the truly multicultural community they discovered in Australia, in addition to the quality of life, the level of education and a welcoming community encouraged them to return permanently in October 2004.

Says Fiona: "After the trip was the right moment to settle in a new place. Before departing on Alithia we had decided to move to a different part of the world although we love Germany, somewhere close to water, with a temperate climate and a community whose values we could identify with and where our children would happily grow."

When Jost finally settled in Australia he became involved in Tyro, a business with a special banking license that competes with the big four banks to offer EFTPOS services. This year, the business was recognised by BRW Magazine as the fourth fastest growing enterprise in Australia.

"Between bank bashing and bank lobbying, we feel that we have something to contribute. We are indeed successfully competing with the major retail banks in a core banking process. My ambition is to become a commentator on issues like innovation and competition in the banking space and entrepreneurship in general," says Jost.

But Jost is not the only enterprising member of his family; Fiona is an entrepreneur in her own right. "During our travels we always needed sunscreen, but often when we were ashore sightseeing we found we'd left it on the boat. So I came up with the idea of the Sunband, a bracelet that holds sunscreen so that we always had sunscreen on us," says Fiona.

Developing the product was a steep learning curve given Fiona didn't have previous experience in pharmaceuticals or registering products with the Therapeutic Goods Administration. She also needed to invent a filling machine to fill the bracelets with sunscreen before she could take the product to market.

Fiona was successful in licensing the Sunband to Johnson & Johnson to take the product worldwide, which is currently marketed under the Piz Buin brand.

I can't possibly do justice to the Stollmann's incredible tale of adventure and business success in a short

blog post. But I hope it gives you inspiration to follow your own dreams, personally and in business, in 2011. Happy new year.

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