

Take care with children's futures

By Gill South

FAMILIES AND how they influence the career choices we make can be incredibly influential. It's common for people to do law because there's always been a lawyer in the family and they have the IQ.

If there is the family farm to consider, someone in the brood will be expected to take it on when the older generation retires from the land.

Sometimes, rather than following in the footsteps of our elders, we take traits passed down through the family and make them work for us that way.

Sarah Trotman, the businesswoman behind the Small Business Expo series running in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, says all the five children in her family have entrepreneurial flair and an ability to take risks.

This flair came from her father, a computer analyst who set up one of the country's first computer bureaux, she says. Her ambition, on the other hand, came from her teacher mother, while her practical attitude is down to her father's example.

His insistence on giving her another skill has stood her in good stead.

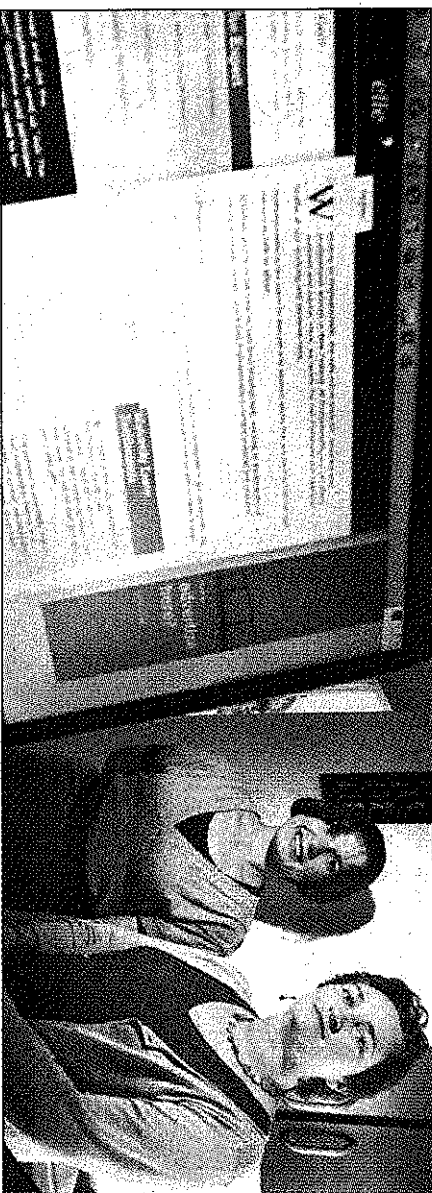
"My ability to get up and do public speaking was about his determination for taking speech lessons," says Trotman. "He was adamant all five children could conduct themselves in public."

Her public speaking has helped her carve out her high-profile career and none of her siblings have taken on the professions of their parents.

"We've all gone off on tangents," says the entrepreneur who joined her father's credit management company straight from school. Trotman worked there until she was

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BREAKING THE MOULD: Galia BarHava-Monteith, pictured with her father, wanted her to become a lawyer. Sparkes, right studied developmental psychology although her father wanted her to become a lawyer.

aged 33 when the business was sold.

Working in the family company, you have to work twice as hard as the others because you are the family member, says Trotman. She was general manager at the company by the time she was 26, which she says was probably too young.

"I was technically capable. I could bankrupt people but I didn't know how to write a business plan," she says.

It is a good idea to introduce your kids to what you do at work so they can see up close what you do, says executive coach Dr Iain McCormick. He suggests people take their kids into work during the school holidays and get them to stuff envelopes.

Galia BarHava-Monteith, co-founder of www.professionelle.co.nz — the website for professional working wom-

en, says her father — an economist and the deputy treasurer of Israel — always wanted her to be a lawyer and was quite put out when she decided to study developmental psychology.

As it turned out she went into business after her masters degree, starting with the Boston Consulting Group and becoming ethics manager at Fontena. She now runs Professionelle with business partner Sarah Wilshaw-Sparkes and consults.

As it has turned out, her father is happy with the direction her career has taken — she married a lawyer rather than becoming one and her 77-year-old parent is now writing novels.

It just shows that if the families remain positive and don't have set ideas about their children's futures, it can all work out amicably.

Iain McCormick, director of the Executive Coaching Centre, says it is a good idea for parents to take their children into work so they can see what their work is like. Even stuff envelopes they can learn about a parent's profession and see if it's something they might want to do some day.

The consultant works with entrepreneurs and helps them with their succession plans with their families. Parents who have plans for their children should act carefully, says McCormick. "Generally parents who do well have clear boundaries with children," he says. "Those who give them a lot of freedom from within (and a lot of support) will do much better than the parents who either don't have boundaries or who have boundaries but don't support them."

