

# The new IT girls

Mish and Michael Haddad in this venture. And so Praxis started in 1993 and operated initially out of Michael's home. It was a real no-capital backyard start-up.

Praxis has three areas of specialisation: network infrastructure, business systems and software development and providing financial systems for mid-sized organisations. Our focus is on providing services for mid-sized organisations for whom IT is strategic. Our primary market focus is the public sector, which includes non-profit organisations. However, we also do work for professional service companies in the private sector. Technology is becoming more easily accessible to all, including the rural and poor areas. Companies like Praxis have a role to play in making this as painless as possible.

The influx of women into the IT industry is steadily increasing. Lately there's been a big drive from a number of IT companies towards bringing women into this sector. Companies are getting involved in learnership and mentorship programmes with a strong focus on women. There's also a wider range of IT jobs available that will accommodate the different talents that women have.

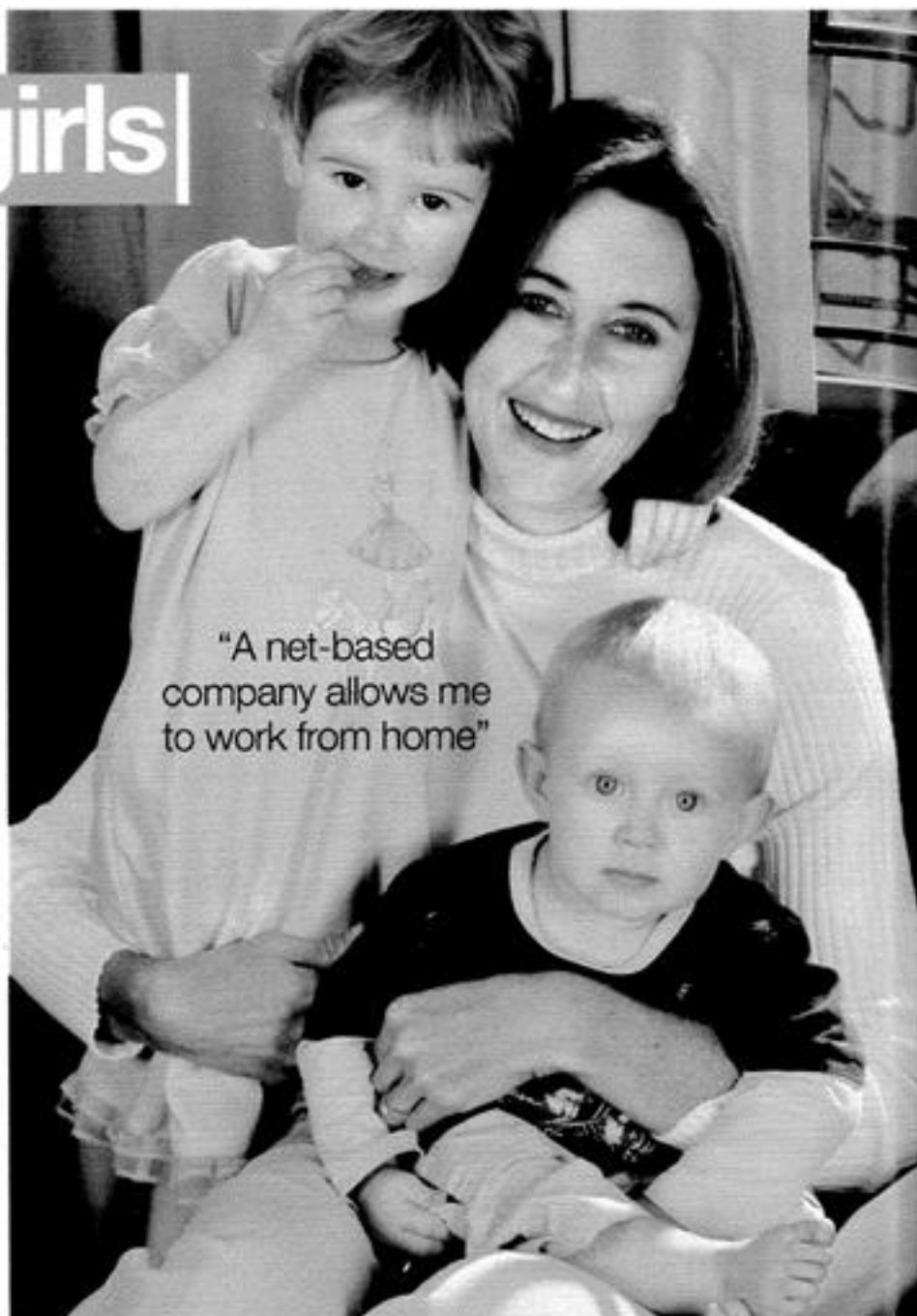
"There's a wider range of IT jobs to accommodate the talents women have"

For me, my biggest obstacle was not having enough experience in my field but I have counteracted this by learning and surrounding myself with experienced and skilled people. This has been a humbling experience for me.

My business has allowed me a number of great successes and rewards. Praxis in itself is a huge achievement – starting from the backyard of my partner Michael's house and developing into a successful business that employs about 60 people. Also being able to deliver on Black Economic Empowerment without the push of legislation and winning awards including the Diva Africa Award, Top Black Woman in ICT and the Louise Chain Business Woman of the year.

I'm grateful for the extensive support I've received, from all my colleagues at Praxis and Mish and Michael who took a chance by inviting me to work with them when it wasn't fashionable to partner with a black person, and my family. I've grown so much through my business, and it's a constant reminder of where I come from."

Visit Miriam's website at [www.praxis.co.za](http://www.praxis.co.za)



"A net-based company allows me to work from home"

"I didn't need much capital to get started"

**C**ara Mullin, 33, married to Richard, went from travel consultant of 10 years, to web directory master after giving birth to daughter Kayla, 2½ years. And after Carrick was born a year ago, she decided to take the plunge and started kidzworld. After eight years in Johannesburg, they recently moved back to kwaZulu-Natal.

"While I was working as a travel consultant at Seekers Travel I became interested in e-commerce and the opportunity arose for me to pursue this interest when Seekers acquired [www.travel.co.za](http://www.travel.co.za). The department grew quickly and I was soon managing the e-marketing, websites and electronic newsletters for Seekers Travel, [travel.co.za](http://travel.co.za) and American Express Travel.

After Kayla was born I re-negotiated my contract so that I could work from home. A year and a half later, just after my son was born, my position was amalgamated and required full-time attention. I decided it was time to move on and go ahead with kidzworld, an idea I had for an online kids' directory. The website went live in December 2004.

The idea of kidzworld came about after many failed attempts to search on the Internet for child-friendly restaurants, a crèche in the area where I live and for petting zoos or a place to entertain my kids. It was not only time-consuming but I found there were very few businesses related to children that came up tops on the search engines. Of course, with limited time as a parent and the fact that the moment I sit in front of the computer my