

# Rebecca Powley of Intimate Organics



There's that old riff called "Stuff" done by George Carlin who said that sooner or later, the things that we own basically end up owning us. It's the vicious circle of consumerism; we tend to covet what we gather without giving ourselves much recourse as to what certain things may bring onto us. But we forget that some of that stuff—that we think we need—may just be harmful to our bodies.

We don't usually care much either; we just need ... our stuff. Especially stuff that makes us feel better about ourselves. If the stuff can help us in the sack, then all the better.

To the modern lifestyle built around the synthetic amenities it accumulates, Rebecca Powley's youth traveled in the exact opposite direction. She can thank her parents for that. Describing her childhood more like a chapter outline from a Steinbeck novel than of contemporary upbringing (i.e. dolls, designer clothes, a sports car at Sweet 16), Powley, now Director of New Business Development of Intimate Organics, was taught to rely on nature more than the chemical by-products that come from it. Earth would provide for her all the stuff she'd ever need.

As a teenager, growing up outside of Toronto, Ontario, in a 200-year-old farmhouse, Powley's parents were a couple of "Granolas" (similar to hippies; however they never followed the Grateful Dead). To the Powley family, Mother Nature was the sole provider to all. Share and share alike.

To give an example, Powley didn't experience electricity until she was 17 years old. Oil lamps, a wood stove and shower basins were her family's home furnishings. Television was brought to life via the juice of a car battery. This was all done by choice. The Powleys understood modernity—they just chose to live life differently.

Powley eventually became acclimated to the rest of

the 20th century and graduated from Sheridan College with a background in advertising and marketing. Then, like everyone else holding some variation of a communications degree, Powley procrastinated. After that, she did the next logical thing—went backpacking through Europe. But bypassing the business world came to a halt with an introduction to a product called Viacreme, a stimulating gel for women.

"From what I recall, there was nothing about that product that piqued my interest as a female," says Powley. "From the packaging to the ingredients it contained, I thought I could produce a better product. Something that would appeal to those who were health conscious, but also those customers who shopped via the right kind of marketing."

After extensive research and development, Powley's first product on the market was her own clitoral enhancement gel called "Tickle Her Pink." Debuting in 2001, Powley soon released other variations like "Tickle Her Nipple," "Tickle Her G-Spot," and "Like a Virgin," a vaginal tightening cream, all under her original company POW Products. In 2008, Powley modified her business with the introduction of Intimate Organics, the first complete line of intimacy products made from certified organic extracts. Mother Nature was officially invited inside the bedroom.

Powley's purpose was to provide the adult retail industry with the most natural and effective intimacy products on the market. Intimate Organics stance was loud and clear: no synthetics, no chemicals, nothing harmful to the human body. Of their introductory 28 SKUs (massage balm to lube to Aromatherapy), everything came au naturel.

"What we're finding is that consumers are being bombarded with products that are in some way, shape or form, organic," says Powley. "Though mass marketing, consumers are subconsciously getting the fact that organic

products are the norm. And we felt that the only industry that wasn't clued into this was the adult industry. There were a couple of natural lubes out there, but in terms of entire lines, they have been overlooked. There was such a need for it in the adult market; and there is so much crap out there when talking about gels I couldn't believe people were willing to put them in their bodies."

Intimate Organics now offers four separate lines of products: Intimacy, Massage, Spa and Aromatherapy. All are organic, all come with the given idea that "Sex is Natural." It's also mainstream—just healthier. In a way, organic products have become the good stuff we crave.

"Consumers that shop at adult stores also shop at the big box retailers and the pharmacy chains, so they will be familiar with organic products already," says Powley. "Knowing that these products are safer for you is not just a major selling point, but also a point to healthier living."

**STOREROTICA:** *How familiar were you with the organic movement before building your company around it?*

**POWLEY:** Since as long as I can remember. Both of my parents felt that the products one would buy in the grocery store would eventually give you cancer. They herded goats and liked to live naturally. To this day, they brush their teeth with some funky baking soda from Whole Foods. My parents grew up in downtown Toronto, but rejected the modern lifestyle and wanted to get away from it all. I don't necessarily live my life like that, but saw the benefit in natural ingredients.

**STOREROTICA:** *But it can't be a coincidence that you grew up to oversee a company that creates products that are, basically, free from all chemicals?*

**POWLEY:** There must be some ties to how I was raised, but there are also other factors. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer about eight years ago. She refused chemo and those other nasty chemicals. After her tumor was removed she took organic red clover (a particular herb) and her cancer never came back. I thought she was crazy, but it left an impression on me that natural remedies might work.

**STOREROTICA:** *Was your mother's illness an catalyst for you and your company?*

**POWLEY:** Well, I became aware of the other products being offered in the adult market at that time. Our mission at Intimate Organics has always been to provide the most natural, safe, but also effective personal care and intimacy products to consumers. We're a healthy alternative to what I consider to be these mass-produced synthetic products, and to not be so dependent on stuff that may cause harm to our bodies. We wanted to provide products with the highest quality without going overboard price-wise. That's why we wanted to do the organic extract; avoid the paraben, avoid the menthol. We wanted to do something different, but also educate the consumers while offering them products that will enhance their intimacy.

**STOREROTICA:** *Today, "organic" seems to be a marketing buzzword; something shoppers hear during a commercial or read on the back of a Kashi box. People hear it and think, okay, green means chemical-free. But they may also think products that are organic are more expensive. Without too much semantics, what does it mean to be "organic"?*

**POWLEY:** Organic means ingredients that have not been touched by chemicals. With Intimate Organics, our products are made with certifiable organic extracts. Depending on the extract, they are used to enhance performance. It's what I refer to as a "clean" good. Of course, some of our products do contain preservatives, but that's only what's necessary to ensure a longer shelf life.

**STOREROTICA:** *You come from a background of advertising, not pharmacology. How did you create the right chemistry between the two in order to come up with Intimate Organics?*

**POWLEY:** I researched what I thought I would want in a product. I researched ingredients that were in other products and found those I liked and those I didn't. For example, I did not like parabens.



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**STOREROTICA:** *Parabens are seemingly to gels what phthalates are to toys. Could you explain what exactly parabens are and why they are considered harmful?*

**POWLEY:** The downfall of parabens is that they are used as a preservative. They can be absorbed in the skin and have been known to cause breast cancer cell growth. So remembering back to my mother, that was my first alarm. Parabens can also mimic estrogen. If someone has an allergic reaction to anything, parabens can actually heighten that reaction. Parabens promote dermatitis and rosacea, and then here's the kicker—they have been known to decrease sperm cells. If cancer doesn't scare men off, than that fact definitely will.

**STOREROTICA:** *What's even scarier is the fact that they are virtually everywhere in cosmetics, right?*

**POWLEY:** Sure. Parabens are commonly found in shampoo, shaving gels, toothpaste, lubes, etc. Chances are your bathroom is a holding ground for parabens.

**STOREROTICA:** *Well now that my personal hygiene is forever ruined, how can this sort of thing be prevented from happening to other people? Can we make parabens illegal?*

**POWLEY:** I'm a Canadian, so it's different up here. But in the states, that's all up to the FDA. Parabens are cheap. Parabens are also used widely by large corporations who have tons of money and, hey, why not? I'll say it—it's the government. Parabens aren't going away.

**STOREROTICA:** *Another ingredient Intimate Organics is known to avoid is alum, correct?*

**POWLEY:** Absolutely, it is one of the nastiest ingredients out there. Alum is used in vaginal tightening gel literally causing the vaginal tissue to dehydrate. To give you a good comparison, it is used in pickling. It's very cheap and that's why companies load it up in some of their products. What Intimate Organics uses is natural capsicum, which comes from the pepper plant. Instead of removing moisture it causes the vagina walls to contract. What this will do for the man and the woman is allow them to feel every inch of penetration. It also eliminates having to buy that five-gallon jug of lube.

**STOREROTICA:** *But besides your creams and enhancement gels, Intimate Organics does have other products for different uses; they may or may not be "natural," depending on someone's perspective. What can you tell us about your Adventure and Daring Creams?*

**POWLEY:** Oh, well those are our anal sprays! As an industry, we've come far with this type of product. Gay, straight, male and female, we recognize that anal sex can be very rewarding. Look how many prostate toys are in the market now. Basically, out in the market there are few sprays that are appealing to a woman. What we've done is market a product for either a man or woman to purchase that doesn't look offensive and actually looks like the product has integrity, which our Adventure and Daring lines certainly do.

What retailers should take notice with these sprays are the ingredients of lidocaine or benzocaine. These ingredients deaden nerve endings temporarily. But the reason why humans have nerve endings or have the ability to experience pain is to say, "Stop what you're doing ... something is wrong!" If used all the time around a mucus

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membrane, benzocaine or lidocaine can enter the body and cause toxicities. They're just bad all the way around.

**STOREROTICA:** *When you first came into the adult retail industry, how surprised were you that there was zero regulation when it came to these types of products? Not even ten years ago, a product with raunchy packaging loaded with benzocaine, menthol and everything else the industry regards as detrimental to not only business but also the body, was selling well for retailers. What finally caused attitudes to shift?*

**POWLEY:** In terms of the quality of products, in the last seven years that I've been in the industry, there has been a complete turnaround mainly because there was so much room for improvement. And, not to come across as gender-biased, but it isn't a man's industry anymore.

**STOREROTICA:** *With such a variety of massage creams and items in erotic retail, customers may assume that the majority of them are safe. How can retailers explain to their customers the concerns over particular products without running the risk of losing a sale? Seems like a moral dilemma.*

**POWLEY:** Retailers need to know their customers are much more educated now. (Retailers) can't assume that customers aren't familiar with these items. It's not like they are in a small section of a store with black windows. Erotic retail is specialty retail and these are specialty items. Customers are doing their research before coming in and buying. So good retailers can provide the final word once they decide exactly what they want to purchase. **E**

*For more information on Intimate Organics, please visit [www.intimateorganics.com](http://www.intimateorganics.com), email [Rebecca@intimateorganics.com](mailto:Rebecca@intimateorganics.com), or call Rebecca Powley at (888) 940-6887.*