

Skirmish busts GFC stress

Brittany Vonow

FORGET your economic worries, grab a laser tag gun and head outside, a Brisbane-based business owner has recommended.

Nicole Lander, co-founder of BattleLIVE, said Australians had found great relief playing laser skirmish during the economic downturn.

"People do like to have a bit more entertainment and escapism if their businesses are struggling," she said and pointed at the business's overseas growth as an example.

Ms Lander said the business she ran with her husband Peter started to export laser tag equipment to the UK in 2002 and this financial year had seen a 45.2 per cent growth in exports.

"Everybody says the EU is terrible and banks are falling apart," she said.

"But they still like playing their games."

She named France, Belgium and Spain as burgeoning markets for the specialised outdoor laser skirmish game and said other Australian businesses had the same potential to be successful overseas.



"Australians definitely punch above their weight on the world stage," she said.

"We're quite good at quirky and high-technology products." She said the overseas market

was difficult but: "where there's a will, there's a way".

"Australian businesses are really good at exporting, especially if they have a niche product."

Last month the company won the arts and entertainment category in the Premier of Queensland's Export Awards, co-sponsored by *The Courier-Mail*.

But BattleLIVE is still looking at domestic growth and was awarded the Arts and Entertainment Award 2011 last month for its business efforts.

Ms Lander said the business,

which she and her husband Peter began in 1999, would continue looking towards domestic growth.

"As video games have become more mainstream, our business has grown ... because what we do is a live version of (video game) *Call of Duty*," she said.

"We definitely see our future business expanding, especially domestically. It's just the tip of the iceberg."

She said BattleLIVE, which allowed people to play laser tag outside, experienced the most business in September.

"There are lots of people's birthdays in September as well as team break-ups," she said.

"We love September."

Ms Lander said one of the biggest challenges had been paying for research and development into the product.

"We haven't had a huge capital injection," she said.

"It's been a bit of a juggling act to grow and still reinvest the profits into research and development."

But she said it was all worth it when she saw people enjoying the game.

"It's just the smiles on the kids' faces ... they just squeal with delight."

CAMO GIRL:
The laser skirmish game BattleLIVE is flourishing in the downturn.