FORTUNE
SMALL BUSINESS
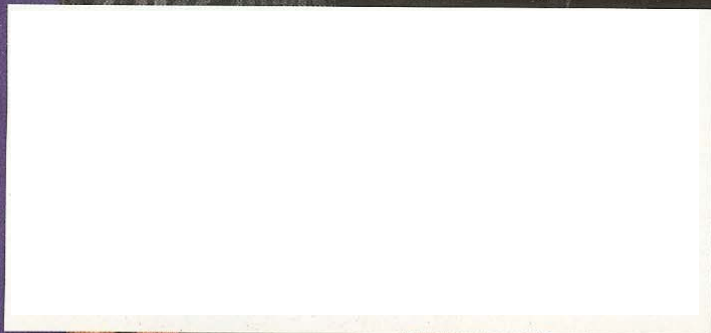
SLEEPING
WITH THE BOSS

Love is hard. Entrepreneurship is harder.
Yet more couples are running businesses together.
ARE THEY NUTS?

CAMERON HUGHES and **JESSICA KOGAN** are married to each other and to their wine business.

PLUS
Tech That Helps Build Teamwork

> **"We've been told that if we can manage an amicable divorce, then tricky real estate issues must be a piece of cake."** —YVETTE BETANCOURT

Ex-Spouses, and Partners

Martyn Verster and Yvette Betancourt

The Closing Company

Miami

WHEN ENTREPRENEUR-ial couples divorce, their company is usually dissolved and the assets divided. But among a few hardy partners, a romantic breakup doesn't end the business connection.

Case in point: Yvette Betancourt and Martyn Verster. They married in 1988, and eight years later Betancourt saw demand for a high-end school bus service featuring comfortable seats and snacks. She created a company to fill the niche and soon was managing a fleet of ten vans.

When the couple divorced in 2001 —"not just because of work," says Verster—they sold the firm and found separate careers. Three years later Betancourt began itching to launch a title and escrow firm. She asked Verster to join her. Verster said yes. He's a lawyer; she's a real

estate agent: a perfect match. In 2004 the Closing Company was born. It turned a profit its first year and grossed $600,000 in 2007. "Before, when we disagreed, there was this underlying feeling of 'Don't you love me?'" explains Betancourt. "It sounds immature, but that comes into play. Some separate feelings out, but we're better off working not as a couple." Both remain unmarried, though Betancourt is in a relationship.

She relies on Verster for legal matters, he counts on her for marketing, and their two children can see their parents together on a day-to-day basis. Customers are impressed. "They don't step on each other's toes," says client David Kutner, franchisee owner of HomeVestors of America.

"We've been told," says Betancourt, "that if we can manage two companies and an amicable divorce, then tricky real estate issues must be a piece of cake."