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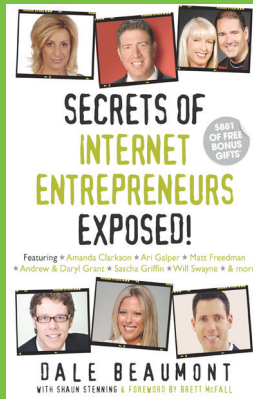
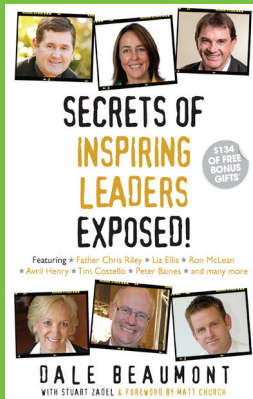
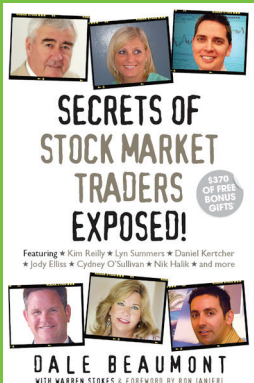
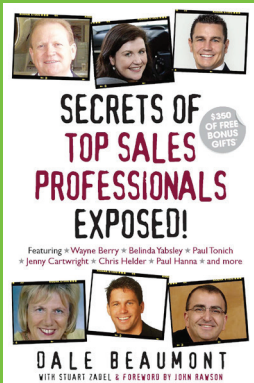
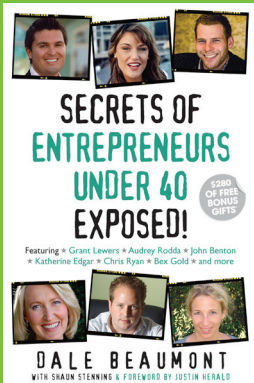
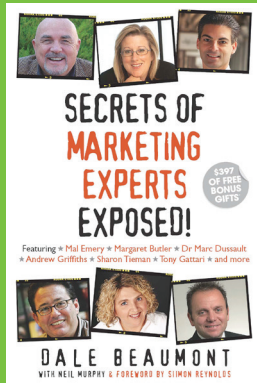
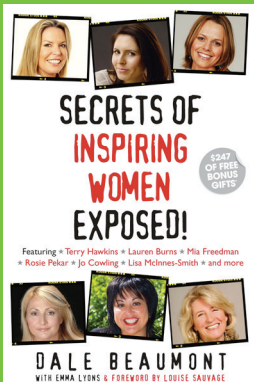
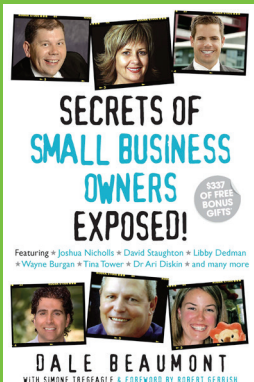
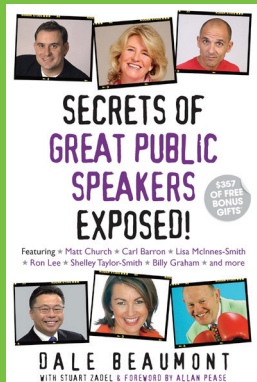
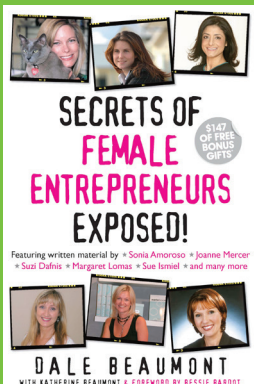
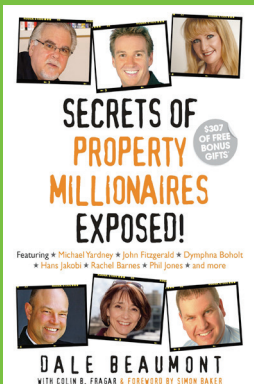
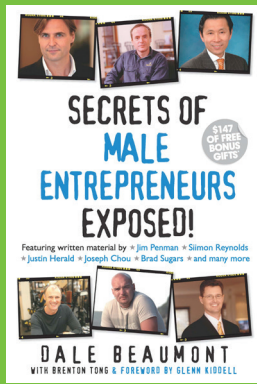
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"This is an excellent series of books. The most interesting part was reading about the values of the contributors and how much of an impact these have on their success and the success of their businesses. There is hope for the 'good guys'."

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“Having read a lot of books within the genre, the ‘Secrets Exposed’ series has really opened my eyes when it comes to business concepts and ideas that I never would have thought of. They are a fantastic resource.”

SAM BAILEY – *Small Business Owner*

“To me, the best thing about the ‘Secrets Exposed’ series is the insight it gives into the backgrounds and journeys of the people profiled, which when combined, gave me a powerful reference for my own life and success.”

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“A riveting series of books that I am in awe of, I am ecstatic about them; they have turned me into a bookworm. They will show you how everyday people just like you and I can and do achieve amazing things. If inspiration and motivation is what you are seeking, then you may have just found what is needed to take you to the next level in your journey.”

SHARON BARLOW – *Bouncing Bodz Pty Ltd*

“In these books I loved the real life experiences that successful people had to endure in order to achieve true success. It shows those of us who are younger, or those just starting out, that there will be many obstacles to overcome but you can still do it. It’s a true account of success which alerts us to the failures one can avoid.”

ASH HARAN – *Business Entrepreneur*

“The ‘Secrets Exposed’ series offers a great opportunity for readers to hear from those who have already achieved business success. They give real life accounts which can be influential in making success happen for you.”

FRANK PATRICKS – *Hospitality Executive*

“I love these ‘Secrets Exposed!’ books and have bought all of them. The stories are very inspiring and have helped me to take my business to another level. Everyone must read them, today, more than ever, because we need to be living our dreams. Congratulations on a great series.”

MARIE VARNIER-GITTARD – *Investor and Business Owner*

“Because of the ‘Secrets Exposed!’ series, I have been able to make changes in my life. I have realised that until now no one believed in me so therefore I did not believe in what I can achieve, however, I do now! I have learnt so much from the contributors which has helped me to determine where my life is going and how I am going to get there.”

TRACEY THOMPSON – *Account Manager*

“If there was one word to describe this series of books, it would be ‘real’. There are a lot of books out there that claim to tell real stories by real people, however, often they are misleading. These books provide numerous perspectives and answers to a number of different questions, and I can guarantee you will learn at least one thing from each chapter.”

ALICE HOYLE – *Beauty Therapist*

“We’ve all heard the saying, ‘Surround yourself with successful people’. A big thank you to Dale and the ‘Secrets Exposed!’ team for doing all the legwork and interviewing these successful entrepreneurs. The ‘Secrets Exposed!’ series has given me the opportunity to surround myself with these winners at my own pace, in my own time.”

TC LAM – *Strategic Investment Consultant*

“These ‘Secrets Exposed’ books have truly had an impact on my business and personal life since reading them. I found the format so easy to follow, and I learnt something new from every contributor. I have recommended these books to many of my friends and I am looking forward to future titles as I believe they will all hold secrets that will benefit me.”

SOPHIE KELSEY – *Budding businesswoman*

“I have read all of the current ‘Secrets Exposed’ series, and can’t wait for the next editions. I find these books inspiring and insightful. Dale has created something unique with all the wonderful ‘added value’ gifts throughout the books, which I have enjoyed receiving and benefiting from.”

LEE CLARK – *Customer Love*

“The ‘Secrets Exposed’ series has become my bible. A secret Rolodex to all the most successful business minds. To be connected instantly to people who are doing and have done what you dream and strive to become is uplifting, inspiring and insightful.”

TANIA MENZIES – *Jelli Beanz International Nannies*

“The ‘Secrets Exposed’ series has been instrumental in allowing me to make a major mental shift about my business and sales. Each chapter is a separate inspiration and a clear reminder of the simple, daily action and persistence required to achieve business success.”

NICOLE SEAGREN – *VISION Finance Australia*

“These ‘Secrets Exposed’ books have taught me a lot more than I learnt during my studies. The practical information and tips have opened my eyes to new ways of doing things. In addition to the books, receiving the free downloads was like continuing that education. I am amazed at how much I have learnt!”

BROOK YORK – *Professional Athlete*

“This book captures the essence of what the entrepreneurial spirit is all about. Plus, it doesn’t just tell you what to do – it shows you through example, providing the motivation you need to take action.”

LOUISE LOVEDAY – *National Sales Manager*

“As a former owner of a failed business, I found this book very practical and simple to understand. Thanks to this book, I know exactly what I’ll be doing differently next time.”

PAUL MATULIN – *Audio Visual Technician*

“I am totally in awe of what Dale has done to bring this book together. What I like most is that it really shows the human side of all the individual entrepreneurs and what, precisely, drove them to such great heights.”

BRENT WILLIAMS – *Managing Director, Tomorrow’s Youth International*

S E C R E T S O F

**SUCCESSFUL
ENTREPRENEURS**

Exposed

D A L E B E A U M O N T

Disclaimer

All the information, techniques, skills and concepts contained within this publication are of the nature of general comment only, and are not in any way recommended as individual advice. The intent is to offer a variety of information to provide a wider range of choices now and in the future, recognising that we all have widely diverse circumstances and viewpoints. Should any reader choose to make use of the information contained herein, this is their decision, and the contributors (and their companies), authors and publishers do not assume any responsibilities whatsoever under any conditions or circumstances. It is recommended that the reader obtain their own independent advice.

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PREFACE

It's with huge pleasure and excitement that I'm now typing the preface for the next generation of 'Secrets Exposed' books.

If you're unaware of what has gone before, between 2005 and 2007 my team and I produced and published 15 books, which collectively sold over a quarter of a million copies.

Under the name 'Secrets Exposed', the series was designed to take people up close and personal with highly successful entrepreneurs in a range of different areas of business. In total, I interviewed 240 achievers and made their knowledge available to everyone.

The series was a hit and over the next few years, I received hundreds of letters and emails from people saying how much the 'Secrets Exposed' series changed their life. Several said it was the catalyst to start a business, invest in property, become a professional speaker or step up to a major leadership position.

A lot has changed since then. The GFC, smartphones, the subsequent app revolution, social media, digital marketing, e-commerce, ubiquitous WiFi and wearable technology were all either yet to be or were a speck compared to what they would become.

Ten years after my first book series was published, I am delighted to bring back 'Secrets Exposed', with the aim of inspiring the next generation of achievers.

While a lot has changed, some things remain the same. What hasn't changed is the reason I decided to create the series in the first place. This stems right back to my childhood.

My journey started at the age of six, when my mum enrolled me in gymnastics. Over the next twelve years, while conquering many physical skills, I also came to understand many of the success principles that are still with me today. I realised early that you don't get far without hard work, discipline, goal setting, delayed gratification and constant self-motivation.

Of all the skills I learned, the one that stuck with me the most was the value of having a coach.

You see, there are two ways to do anything in life. One is to do it on your own — we'll call that trial and error. The other is to learn from those who have gone before you — we'll call that following a recipe.

Using the example of sport, it's basically mandatory to have a coach and it's really the only way to reach the top. This is why you'll always see a coach on the sideline when you watch a major athletic or team sports event.

When I finished my gymnastic career at the age of 18, my first thought was to find coaches for the next phase of my life. With a thirst for knowledge, I began attending courses, workshops and seminars hosted by highly successful people who were excited to share their learnings. Doing this enabled me to compress decades of someone else's experience into just a few days.

In addition, I also started contacting successful people who weren't running courses or giving seminars. I would call anyone who inspired me on the phone and say, "Hi, my name is Dale. You don't know me, but I have just read an article about you in XYZ magazine. I really admire and respect what you have achieved and I was wondering if

I can take you out to lunch. I will meet you anytime and any place, can I please have 30 mins of your time?”. If they accepted, I used that time to interview them about their experiences.

This led me to meet and learn from dozens of amazing people and as a result, it helped me to make over a million dollars before the age of 25.

I share this not so you can be impressed, but so you can understand my point. That is, whatever you want in life, whatever you are shooting for, chances are someone else has already done it, or at least something similar. They’ve already invested years of their life and probably hundreds of thousands of dollars, they’ve made lots of mistakes, learned from them and eventually succeeded.

The way I see it, why would you want to waste your own time, money and effort through trial and error, when you can fast-track your success by following someone’s recipe? As Sir Isaac Newton said, “If I have seen further it is because I have been standing on the shoulders of giants”.

Following someone’s recipe won’t prevent you from making a few mistakes of your own, far from it. What it will do is help you make more calculated and purposeful decisions, rather than big, misguided and ignorant ones.

Back to the story. After conducting my interviews, I realised the advice I was gathering could be and should be helping thousands of people. I requested permission to start sharing the answers of the professionals I had spoken to with others and the rest, as they say, is history.

Before you get started reading, I’d like to briefly share with you the process we go through and explain how to get the most out of reading this book.

Once we have decided on a topic, we find between 12 and 16 business owners. Each time, our aim is to provide a balance between well known and lesser known experts. This way, you get to discover the stories of people you might never hear of otherwise.

From there, we research their achievements and write no less than 30 specific questions. Having tried several formats, we have found written answers to be the best. Sure we could just record an audio interview. However, our experience has shown that unconsidered, off the cuff responses aren't as potent as written ones. Yes, it's more time consuming on both sides, but the heightened quality of considered answers make it worth the effort.

The rest of the production is details, but we want you to know and appreciate that hundreds of hours of time have been put into producing this book. When you consider that it's now yours for the cost of an inexpensive dinner, it really puts things into perspective.

Now, while we have made it as easy for you as possible to access the stories and advice of over a dozen high achievers, you do need to do some work at your end.

You see, if you sit there and read this book like a novel, it will be nothing but an enjoyable form of entertainment. However, if you want to maximise your learning and in turn your future success, you need to read as though you are a student. I suggest you read with a highlighter, write what you learn in the margins, share what you learn with others and, most importantly, decide how and when you can apply what you learn.

Think of this as a textbook, kick-starting your future success!

I want to thank my wife, Katherine, for supporting me with both the original and now this new series. To Emma Chase, who has worked for me for the last twelve years, and has pulled everything together.

Finally, I'd like to thank my many mentors, supporters and friends. Without them, this book would not have been possible.

That's it from me. Now it's time for you to discover for yourself the wonderful wisdom contained in these pages. I know you will apply what you learn and turn your dreams into reality.

Your friend in success,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale Beaumont". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized capital 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the final 't'.

Dale Beaumont
Creator of the 'Secrets Exposed' Series
Sydney, Australia

PS. If you ever want to share with me your story or your feedback, you can reach me here:

<http://dalebeaumont.com/contact>

INTRODUCTION

If you have picked up this book, it's likely for one of two reasons. Firstly, you're thinking about starting a business. Secondly, you have already done so but you're looking for inspiring ideas or new ways to grow.

If you're in the first group, congratulations! Starting your own business is one of the biggest and bravest decisions you can make. Why? Because the failure rates of small business are extremely high.

Don't panic! You'll be pleased to know, education is the antidote to business failure. In other words, the more you learn, the higher your chances of business success.

If you're an aspiring entrepreneur, please read this book from cover to cover. Once you have done that, read the other books in the 'Secrets Exposed' series and come along to one of my live business workshops (if you live in Australia or New Zealand).

Then, when you are ready, take the plunge and don't look back. Along your business owning journey, your resolve will be tested, a lot of people will say no, and at times you may want to quit. When that happens, pull out this book again, read a few pages and remind yourself that you are not alone.

My advice to new business owners is to keep going, be flexible, get feedback, change your approach and above all — persist. Before you

know it, you'll get that first break, which will lead to another and another. Soon enough, your walk will become a run and one day you'll be flying.

To the second group. If you are already an entrepreneur by profession, you have my respect! Even though we may not have met, I already know you are hardworking, determined, resourceful and dynamic. As they say, you're my people.

Now, even though you are already an entrepreneur, I believe it is as important as ever to keep learning and growing. In business, nothing ever stays the same. Things are always moving and they are always evolving, meaning those who don't change risk being left behind.

Before you start reading, I want to share some details about the successful business owners who have been brought together in this book. Like many things in life, it's the blending of ideas, ingredients and cultures that adds richness. When selecting the people whose stories were worth sharing, we looked for the following:

Self-Starters — All the people in this book started their businesses from scratch. None were given their businesses by parents or received funding from scores of investors. We felt this was important to prove that absolutely anyone can succeed and your starting point is irrelevant.

Relatable — In past books, we featured several household names. While it's always fun to read their stories, many are now so successful that they are somewhat difficult to relate to. In contrast, this book contains stories of real people who have achieved success but are still in the trenches. Each of their stories is current and real.

Diverse — Gender is equally represented in this collection of business success stories. However, we have ages ranging from twenty-something to seventy-something (and still going strong). In terms of turnover, the range is everything from a few hundred thousand dollars to \$23

million in annual revenue, and we have included a solid mix of both product and service-based businesses.

When it comes to the chapters themselves, we have structured them to first share how the entrepreneur started their business and overcame their early challenges. From there, we dive deeper into their specific area of knowledge and expertise, be it finding customers, hiring staff, building systems or selling online. Be sure to take notes! There will be so many lessons you can apply to your own journey.

To further assist you in your own endeavours, a number of contributors have also very generously offered valuable gifts to our readers. To claim yours, simply visit the specified website and follow the steps to download the gifts for free.

At the back of this book, we have included the website details of every contributor. You'll discover that a number of them have their own books or resources, which we encourage you to investigate further.

Finally, remember it's what you do after you read this book that is going to determine its real value to you. So go out there and apply what you've learnt. When you reach your first goal — no matter how big or small — let us know so we can share your success story.

Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale Beaumont". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 't'.

Dale Beaumont

CHIEF DREAMER



SKYE ANDERTON

“ The more you learn, the more you know. The more you know, the more you can improve. The more you can improve, the more you can succeed. ”

Skye Anderton

SKYE ANDERTON

Skye Anderton was born in Brisbane in 1979 and grew up the eldest of three children. From a young age, she was always creating things and looking to discover more about the world.

While studying an Arts/Business degree at QUT, Skye started tinkering with beaded jewellery and hand painted bags, selling her home-made products at local markets and to small boutiques. Despite her skills, Skye was told her passion for accessories was a hobby, which would never make her any real money!

To get some 'real' experience, Skye left Australia for London, accepting a position as an accessories buyer and product developer for a large high street retailer. As part of this role, she took responsibility for many millions of pounds worth of product.

After returning home in 2010, Skye relaunched her business, naming it Ruby Olive Jewellery and quickly grew to stock over 150 stores in the first two years. The business gained a reputation for creating purposeful products with stories and soul.

In 2014, Skye won the Telstra Young Business Person of the Year award for QLD. She was named one of QLD's Best and Brightest, gave a TEDx talk on purposeful profit and raised \$15,000 in 30 days for The Hunger Project, a charity very close to her heart. Since then, Skye is regularly featured and interviewed in the media. She is a sought-after speaker, giving presentations which focus on women in business and global women's empowerment.

Today, Skye lives in Brisbane with her husband and two young boys. She is a huge advocate for living positively, passionately, and living purposefully. The core mission for Ruby Olive is to support the community, put smiles on faces and to inspire people to live the boldest life they can.

When did you first discover you had entrepreneurial talent?

I never really considered myself entrepreneurial. In fact, I didn't even know what the word meant until about eight years ago.

For as long as I can remember I have always been making things. I have always wanted to investigate things and been interested in the 'why' of things.

Growing up, I was a creative learner. I loved my creative outlets, but I didn't really excel at academic subjects in school. I never studied business, economics or accounting at high school as these things didn't appeal to me.

When I was 15, I participated in a Young Achievers Program. We were put in a group and we came up with an idea, created a product, sold it and learnt the business process along the way. This program showed me that I didn't need to study something like economics or accounting to love business and that going about things in different ways can often make you find solutions for your problems.

Why do you describe yourself as 'Chief Dreamer'?

Dreaming, in my world, is essential. Dreams create excitement and energy, and they drive your passions. If you don't have dreams, how do you have goals and visions of how to make your life the best it can be?

When I started my business, I always wanted to do things a little differently. This included never wanting to have a job title like everyone else. Being Chief Dreamer just makes sense to me.

“ The biggest thing I learned from my first business is that you can’t do everything. ”

What was your first significant business venture and what did you learn from it?

The biggest thing I learned from my first business is that you can’t do everything.

I started a jewellery and accessories business when I was at university, long before the internet was around. I was always using my hands to create things so I taught myself how to sew handbags and make jewellery.

Back then, I designed and handmade everything — I loved the marketing side of the business and was studying marketing at University, so I did all of that as well. I spoke to potential stockists over the phone and drove across town for showings. I also woke up at 3:30am to drive to markets and set up my own stalls.

Every single waking hour when I wasn’t in lectures was filled with designing, making, selling, thinking and trying to work out how to run a business. I did absolutely everything myself.

After doing this for a few years, it occurred to me that I couldn’t do it all myself. If I wanted to really scale this business, I needed help and I needed to learn from others how it could be done.

With that clear focus in mind, after I graduated from university, I decided to put my little business ‘on ice’ for a year and travel overseas to London to get some real life experience.

One year turned into eight years! I returned home a very different person, with a very different business on my mind.

You spent a number of years working as a product developer in the UK. What did you learn from this experience?

My husband and I spent our entire 20s living in London and absolutely loved it.

We travelled as much as we could and we were so fortunate to visit new countries and places almost every month. As we experienced new cultures and traditions, seeing how different people lived gave me a new perspective on life and circumstance.

While I was in London, I worked for a high street retailer as a buyer and product developer. The role meant I got to visit and be exposed to factories and often meet the workers who make the products that get exported all around the world. That process of seeing how something is produced from start to finish really made me appreciate just how much energy goes into one single product, whether a piece of clothing, a toy, a piece of jewellery or a pair of shoes.

So often when we visit a shop, we look at the branding, the price and the features, but we rarely think about what it took to bring that product to life.

Some of the questions I often ask myself:

- How many hours were spent on that actual garment?
- Who did the sewing, cut the threads, finished the hems and then ironed the garment?
- Who added the swing ticket, boxed and weighed the item and called the freight company to arrange the pickup?

So many different people have touched every single thing we see in the shops and I feel like we often take this part of the process for granted. Each one of those people has a name and a story. Some are paid well and have good working conditions. Some don't.

Understanding and appreciating this has influenced so many of my buying decisions personally and within my business. I really believe that it's this understanding of the production process that has shaped how I develop products.

How did you come up with the idea of your jewellery business Ruby Olive?

I always planned to relaunch the business I began when I was 18 when I returned home to Australia.

After working in London and being responsible for £8 million of product, I knew that the original business would look very different to what it was when I left home. I wasn't sure exactly how it was going to be different, but I was confident that I would begin something again.

On our way back home to Australia, my husband and I travelled through India and Africa. Everywhere I looked I could see so much inspiration — the colours and the textures around us were simply amazing.

The people I met and the stories I heard ignited something inside of me. These stories weren't complex or long. In fact, I was drawn to the stories of simple things like the sunset over the Sahara Desert and the intensity of the night sky. Even the mint julep cocktail we bought off a hotelier in India was inspiring. The man who served it to us had never travelled but believed his cocktails were the best in the world.

While camping in the Serengeti National Park under the stars, I started to write my ideas down on paper. Before I knew it, my travel journal became my business plan.

I wanted to create a business that was inspired by the world around us, which was built on stories rather than fashion trends. I could see how

colours and textures could be translated into jewellery and I wanted to create collections that had soul and were more than just products.

When I returned home with all my ideas scribbled in my travel journal, I played with brand names but nothing stuck. The ideas and the dreaming just came so easily, but confirming a brand name was definitely the hardest part.

After a few months and a lot of discussions with friends, I settled on the name Ruby Olive, which felt right. It was a special name to me as it was my grandmother's name and I also absolutely loved that it represented two colours, as colour was a huge part of what I aimed to create.

What is the mission of Ruby Olive?

My team and I create stories in the form of jewellery and fashion accessories that are inspired by the amazing world around us. We're passionate about putting smiles on faces, supporting our community



Some of many beautiful products from Ruby Olive

and living boldly. We love colour as well as things that are that little bit different — and we're not afraid to be *that* odd one out.

What advice would you give to others who are looking for a good business idea?

In my opinion, a good business idea needs to have three things:

1. *Point of difference* — Having a point of difference means you stand out from the crowd. Why would someone buy from you above someone else? Is your difference the price, the features, the marketing, the branding or the design? Think about what sets you apart.
2. *Customer appeal* — Is there a market for your product and if yes, are people prepared to pay money for it? There are lots of ideas that get discussed in bars and at Friday night barbeques. Some of these are good ideas, but would people actually put their hands in their pockets and give you money in return for this product or service? This is where doing your research is essential.
3. *Problem solving* — If your product or service doesn't solve a real pain point, it's going to be much harder to market and convert buyers.

How did you start making and selling your product?

When I decided to relaunch my business after returning from the UK, I knew straight away I wanted to design the products, but I didn't want to manufacture them myself as I had done with my first business when I was 18.

The first step was to look for manufacturers that could produce what I was after. This was challenging as finding good suppliers is not easy.

I got in touch with some of my old contacts who I met while working in the UK and I also visited trade fairs to meet suppliers face-to-face. I wanted to see their standards and talk to them about their quality and their lead times.

As a new business, I had next to nothing to spend on product and nothing to indicate what designs/products would work. To mitigate this risk, I negotiated cost prices and went with a supplier who was able to provide me with small quantities so I could experiment.

From there, I rang about six freight companies and negotiated terms with the freight forwarder. Everything had to be budgeted and accounted for so I looked at every single invoice in minute detail, even down to the last \$30.

I didn't have money, but I had time. I spent all of my time researching every tiny detail of every supplier — everyone from swing ticket manufacturers to freight forwarders and postage providers, like Australia Post.

Every single element of each product was added to a spreadsheet, which I call my range plan. It includes absolutely everything about the product; things such as pricing costs, freight costs, GST, swing ticket and packaging costs as well as sample comments, purchase order numbers, quantities ordered and expected delivery dates.

From this document I work out what the RRP and the wholesale price will be in AUD and USD and what my profit margin is. I then work out my costing budget and responding profit on that collection based on selling 70 per cent of the stock at full price.

This is the document I used when I started and it is the exact same document I use now (only now I have a lot more tabs).

“ I spent all of my time researching every tiny detail of every supplier ... ”

How do you source all of your components and where are your products made now?

For Ruby Olive, sourcing is a constantly evolving process.

We source from many parts of the world. We have a lot of our hand poured resin items made by artisans in the Philippines, but we have other items made by artisans in India and Thailand.

Components like ribbon or clasps often come in bulk from China and Hong Kong, and I find many of them by visiting the suppliers in the streets of Sham Sho Po in Hong Kong.

We are always looking for new, interesting components and artisans who are creating really interesting products, which could translate into jewellery designs. We find them by visiting trade fairs, searching the internet or responding to word-of-mouth.

I think many people believe creating a product is only about designing the actual item. The truth is, there are so many exciting facets to product development.

When developing products, what are four key things that need to be considered in order to succeed?

When developing products, you need to fully understand all the touch points of the supply chain. This really does help you make more informed decisions.

When you understand all these touch points you can work out what the potential risks will be and how to prevent them. I've listed a few key areas below:

1. *Relationships and clear communication* — Whether you are developing one product or hundreds, it's important to build good relationships

with your suppliers. The more they understand what you are trying to achieve and the more you understand their business, the better the communication will be. This is particularly important when there is a language barrier. Words, gestures and tones over the phone, over email and face-to-face can have different meanings, so it's beneficial to do a little bit of research on the subtle cultural differences of that country. A positive relationship can have so much weight on your cost price negotiations and your priority as a customer. Urgent delivery of samples or your re-order for that bestselling product may be able to jump to the front of the production queue, increasing your revenue faster. Clear, simple communication is essential and it's really important to put everything in writing. I've found it's best when communicating with foreign suppliers to use simple language where possible to avoid confusion. Use numbers, bullet points and illustrations to clarify even the simplest of changes or developments.

2. *Approving samples* — Approving samples in writing and testing your product before you give your manufacturer the green light is so incredibly important. It's a mistake I've personally made a number of times. I've approved a sample from a relatively new supplier via a photo as I didn't want to waste time waiting for the revised sample to be shipped for approval. The photo sample looked great but because I didn't get to quality test the item we ended up receiving a large batch of poor quality products that we couldn't return. It was money down the drain as we couldn't even have sold them at a reduced rate because they would have given our brand a bad reputation.
3. *Profit margins and negotiation* — I see so many businesses work out their costings and profit margins based solely on how much the product actually costs to buy. They forget to look at all the other costs associated with getting that product from the manufacturer to the customer. These costs might include freight, taxes and duties, swing tickets, barcoding and the product packaging. Only once you've worked out your real costs can you determine if your product is going to be profitable. Cost price negotiations are

“ It’s always best to allow a buffer until you work out how reliable your manufacturer is. ”

an important part of the puzzle but need to be played out very carefully. Some larger manufacturers are used to negotiating and expect it, especially on larger volumes. Smaller ones may not be comfortable negotiating and could just give you an inferior quality product for a reduced price. As you build your relationship with a supplier, you tend to develop an understanding

on what is involved in creating that product and therefore what is a good/not so good price. Doing your research and understanding what other suppliers charge for similar items is also important.

4. *Timely deliveries* — When you develop products overseas, particularly in developing countries, many things operate differently. There are strikes, traffic delays and cultural holidays. Unforeseen weather conditions can also play a huge role in delays. Some cultures are certainly more relaxed about deadlines than others. It’s always best to allow a buffer until you work out how reliable your manufacturer is. This saves you from embarrassing situations with customers. Whenever possible I like to make a trip to visit manufacturers. This helps me build a positive relationship with them, plus I gain greater understanding and appreciation of their production process as well as their staff working standards.

At what point did you decide to start selling your product online?

From the very beginning, I launched with an online website although my original focus was wholesale. I could see that if I got the brand out to the right number of retail stockists it would gain a greater reach.

Ruby Olive grew from 0-60 stockists in the first year, and within two years we had stock in around 150 stores, including a handful internationally.

Initially, I managed all the accounts and had a few sales agents around the country selling the products on our behalf into stores. Over time, however, many of our wholesale stores closed their doors. It was a tough time to be in retail.

As stockists closed, new customers found us while shopping online. There was a pattern and a clear new direction for us. We created a new direct-to-consumer online strategy and started to really focus on digital marketing. That made a huge difference.

We started really nurturing our community and began to build a solid returning customer base. We were conscious not to sell to our customers but to nurture and build trust, which has worked.

After three months of focusing properly on customer-facing digital marketing, our consumer revenue increased x 500 LFL (Like For Like) on the previous year. As we tweaked, learned and improved, our revenue just kept growing.

Digital marketing is such a huge umbrella. There is so much to learn and there are so many changes taking place everyday. A Facebook campaign can be working like a charm, and then there's an algorithm change and transactions will take a nosedive. We're constantly on our toes, but it's so incredibly dynamic and exciting.

Would you advise product makers to set up a retail store or is purely online the best way to go?

Honestly, unless you are making huge waves with a physical shop front or have a huge budget, I do believe playing online with perhaps a wholesale and/or popup element is the way to go.

It's more flexible, there's less risk and there are certainly fewer staffing issues. Don't get me wrong, I still love the idea of touching and feeling

a product, but I do think that can be achieved by wholesaling and rotating pop up stores.

The main benefit of online is everything is measurable. For example, you can review your Google Analytics to find exactly where your customers are coming from. You can also create Facebook/Instagram/Pinterest Ads and target your specific audience to see the exact messages that will resonate with them.

Another tactic to boost your online sales is to set up cart abandonment so your customers are reminded they left something in their cart. The opportunities with online to reach global markets and scale are endless. Very well photographed images and product videos are also golden!

Once you get a new customer, how do you keep them coming back?

Firstly and most importantly, we need to offer a fantastic product that makes them feel amazing. We also need to offer impeccable customer service at every touch point.

After a new customer has received their first order, we invite them to become part of our community on social media so we can continue the conversation. When they receive their product they also get additional information on our story and our business philosophy, this also helps to gain their trust.

When a customer places an order we incentivise them to return within the first two weeks with time-sensitive promotions. From there, we offer little reminders via email marketing and social advertising of our new products and promotions.

How important is mobile to your e-commerce sales and how do you make your website mobile friendly?

Mobile is more important now than ever with a predicted 39.6 per cent of all e-commerce sales being made on mobile and estimated to reach a whopping 53.9 per cent by 2021.

Websites need to look as good on mobile as they do on desktop. There are really no excuses not to have a responsive website as it's so easy to do with most platforms these days.

It's also really important to regularly check your website and your customer flow on mobile to see how everything looks. Something that looks gorgeous on desktop may look shocking on mobile. You need to also check how the navigation works on mobile to make sure customers can easily access your full product range.

How do you go about picking the right platforms for digital sales and digital marketing? How many should you focus on?

We are never afraid to try a new app or platform out. At the same time, we don't jump into something just for the sake of it. It needs to offer something better than our existing platform so we generally create a pros and cons spreadsheet when we are researching and investigating new things.

We always weigh up the time taken/money spent to change over versus what real impact it would have on the business. At Ruby Olive, we focus on one app/platform change at a time, unless they are related.

I've learnt the hard way ... when we focus on too many changes at once we get brain fog and things don't get done properly.

What do you think are the essential qualities or attributes of successful entrepreneurs?

The three main qualities I believe are essential are:

1. *Passion* — Passion is essential, whether you have a passion for business, your product or simply finding ways to solve your customers' problems. Being in love with your job should be what gets you up in the morning as it will keep you moving when times are tough.
2. *A lust for learning* — Business and the environment around us changes so fast that the only way to keep up is to keep on learning. This involves making regular discoveries about your customers, your product, your marketing, your sales, your systems and your technologies. The more you learn, the more you know. The more you know, the more you can improve. The more you can improve, the more you can succeed.
3. *Accepting change* — Evolution happens in all facets of life. You can't run away from it. I'm a great believer that businesses need to continually be evolving to stay ahead and you can never rest on your laurels.

What recommendations would you make to an aspiring entrepreneur who wants to start their own business?

The three things every aspiring entrepreneur should do before starting a business are:

1. *Get inspired* — When I was at university and before I knew anyone that had their own business, I constantly ripped articles out of magazines and newspapers about women who had started businesses that were now successful. I had a scrapbook they all went into and that started my dreaming. That book was a constant

source of inspiration. At the time, I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to create an impact like these women.

2. *Start something* — Even if you have no clue, the pure act of starting something, no matter how large or small, gets the ball rolling. It can only grow and you can only learn from there. If I had never started making jewellery at 16 years old to give to my family, I may have never decided to make the very scary leap at 18 to have my first market stall. Had I never gone to that market, I never would have met that local stockist who gave me that first break. Had I not had that first retailer, I would not have learned how to deal with stockists. Although my current business is so far from those days and a lot has happened in between, it really just began with starting something small and improving on it everyday.
3. *Gain experience* — Never underestimate the value of good mentors and good work experience. Learning from those who have been there before can save you a great deal of time and pain. I left my business in Australia to travel to London where I got a job in Buying and Product Development. I can honestly say that without having that experience and being able to learn from my amazing boss (who was my absolute mentor), my business would most certainly not be what it is today.

What have you learnt when it comes to balancing your business and family life?

Balancing a growing business with a growing family is a juggle. Sometimes it works well, sometimes it doesn't.

I've learnt two main things about balancing business and family:

1. *Be organised* — I'm not a naturally organised person, but I've learnt that when I'm organised in my home life, everything just works so much more smoothly. Things such as employing a cleaner, batch freezing food, meal planning dinners and having a freezer full of

muffins and pikelets for school lunches make a huge difference. Because I stay organised, the kids are happier and I don't feel like I'm rushing to get out the door or organise meals at the last minute. I can maximise my time on the business during business hours and not think about what I'm cooking for dinner.

2. *Take a break* — My husband also works for himself so we're fortunate to be able to take off a couple of days or even a couple of weeks every month. Doing this has had a hugely positive impact on both the family and the business. There are so many benefits to taking time out, but honestly, we went years without a holiday. We were constantly stressed, overworked and burned out. One year led to the next and that year's worth of stress transferred over into the one after it. At the beginning of 2017, after feeling very burnt out and after having another year without a proper holiday, I thought enough is enough. I make goals in the business, so why not make a personal goal of one holiday per month? We did it for 2017, and again in 2018. I can't recommend holidays enough, even if it's a day trip to the rainforest. Getting out of the everyday humdrum is magic!

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KNOW YOUR NUMBERS



MARK WILLIAMS

“ First, recognise that business is about people. It is important to build foundations of trust and strong relationships with not just clients but with your team, your suppliers and other stakeholders. ”

Mark Williams

MARK WILLIAMS

Born in 1982 to a former nun, Mark was brought up with a strong foundation of ethics and integrity, which he continues to uphold in everything he does.

Mark's entrepreneurial ventures started in primary school, when he would pocket his tuckshop money then make lunch instead of buying it. His first paying job was as a KFC delivery driver at age ten (with the actual driving outsourced to his father). At 15, Mark became a greyhound trainer, owning and training a greyhound which earned over \$60,000 in prize money.

Mark joined Chartered Accounting and Business Advisory firm Caunt and Lowbeer whilst completing a double degree in accounting and business administration. He earned the title of partner at age 24, whilst completing his CA qualifications.

Now Managing Director at Imagine Accounting, Mark and his team help their clients find more time, pay less tax, and create better cash flow.

Mark is a chartered accountant, registered tax agent, registered SMSF auditor, superannuation financial advisor, Justice of the Peace, Xero certified advisor and, most importantly, a lifelong learner. With a significant property portfolio in both Australia and the USA, he is also an active share investor and property developer.

Having a strong belief in contributing to make the world a better place means Mark personally supports the work of a number of charities. Imagine Accounting also makes regular donations as a partner of not-for-profit initiative Buy1Give1.

Mark lives in Sydney with his wife and two young children. When he can find the time he loves watching sport, having a beer with friends, playing a game of golf, catching live music, and having a bash on his drum kit.

When did you (your family) first discover you had entrepreneurial talent?

As a child, I was always looking for ways to make money.

Mum used to give me tuck-shop money before school, but when she'd leave for work I'd make my lunch and save the money away. When I was ten or eleven, I used to search through our house for unwanted things and organise garage sales or get Dad involved with local market stalls to sell them at.

I managed to convince my family to be involved in a lot of money making projects, so they were well acquainted with my entrepreneurial talent! While still in primary school, and not yet allowed to get a proper job, I talked my Dad into being my driver in a job delivering KFC.

It was through my influence my family got involved in greyhound racing. In primary school I had developed an interest for it and avidly researched it. I'd ask Dad to take me down to the local TAB and get him to place bets for me. By the time I'd started high school I'd gotten in touch with a breeder just outside Sydney who let me work for him on weekends. There I learned all about breeding, rearing and training greyhounds, and with money I saved we bought our first greyhound for \$500.

Our first two greyhounds weren't great racers so I hit the phones and found someone willing to sell us a good racer for \$25,000. Somehow I managed to talk my parents into buying it. This was a lot of money for them, money they didn't really have.

That greyhound earned over \$60,000 in prize money so we fortunately made a profit! This was all by the age of fifteen.

“ I love working

with numbers, solving problems and helping people. ”

What inspired you to start the business that you have today?

I didn't actually start our business — credit must go to my business partner, Peter Caunt, and our former partner, John Lowbeer. I was fortunate to be offered partnership in their business (Caunt and Lowbeer) at age 24, which

is very young in our industry. It was a solid operation at the time with a good team, a great client base and decent profits. Although we were doing well and were in a great position financially, I wanted more. Not more money but more challenge, more growth, and to make more of a difference. I wanted to learn how to grow a business, to better myself and our team, and to build something that we could all be proud of.

I saw the potential in Caunt and Lowbeer and really wanted to accelerate its growth. After John Lowbeer's retirement, we started making some profound changes. This included acquiring two other businesses, moving premises, almost doubling our team and revising our corporate structure. To grow the business, we also created and implemented strategic plans, built a social media presence, ran events, formed strategic partnerships, created an advisory board and recruited an offshore team.

To add to this, we have also undergone a name change and re-brand, migrated most of our business software to the cloud and created more efficient ways to utilise technology. We even took steps to let go of some undesirable clients. I was fortunate to step into the Managing Director role and be the driving force behind many of these changes.

The opportunities that are available in our industry and the impact we as accountants and advisers can have on the lives of our clients, their families and the broader community is largely what motivates me. I love working with numbers, solving problems and helping

people. I love the ongoing changing nature of our industry — there are always new things to learn and be challenged by. Working closely with business owners as their accountant/adviser gives me incredible exposure to a raft of industries and different business models, which I really enjoy. I also truly value the trust our clients place in us as accountants.

I'm incredibly excited about what lies ahead in our clients' businesses and our own. Despite all the hard work of the previous years, I feel as though we are just getting started!

What do you love most about being an entrepreneur?

I believe that small businesses make the world go round. Throughout history, the world has evolved through the ingenuity of entrepreneurs; people who have had progressive ideas and the passion and drive to achieve them.

Businesses have been responsible for championing progress, rather than governments, which are traditionally established to maintain order. Key figures like Henry Ford, Walt Disney, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Oprah Winfrey, Larry Page, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg have all brought something innovative to the world and changed it dramatically.

I also like the freedom that comes with owning my own business. You have more flexibility as a business owner than you do as an employee (although sometimes it feels like you have less, as most business owners would attest to!).

Being in business is like those *choose your own adventure books*, which I loved as a kid. You get to choose the direction of your business and what you spend your days doing. As a small business owner you are involved in all aspects of the business — sales, marketing, HR, IT,

operations, administration, finance, etc. The challenge is to bring it all together and work out where the absolute best use of your time is.

When all is said and done, I love working with small business owners. It is an energising community with people sharing their stories, ideas, challenges, wins and losses. Small business owners are driven, motivated, passionate and hardworking. These are the people I most relate to.

Right from the start you've worked with business partners. What are the pros and cons and how have you managed them?

A business partnership is like a marriage. Some pros are:

- You are not alone. You have people to bounce things off, collaborate with and share the load. You can enjoy and share the success and alleviate the loneliness that sometimes comes with owning a small business.
- The risk is shared. During difficult times the pressure is not all on your shoulders, you have each other for financial and emotional support.
- Accountability. Many lone business owners struggle with this. They're at the top, and unless they have advisors or mentors keeping them accountable they're not reporting to anyone.

Some cons are:

- Having to be accountable can be a disadvantage. You may want to work on something but having others to confer with slows down the decision making process.
- Conflicting views and opinions.
- The reward is shared, depending on the arrangements.

The key reason my partners and I have succeeded is continual communication. The key is to always be truthful and speak your mind. Just like going into a marriage, there needs to be a solid foundation of trust, otherwise it won't work.

My advice is to not be too hasty to jump into bed with a partner. Just as before marrying someone you would typically go through a dating or engagement period, you need to take it slow before committing to a business partnership.

Key factors to consider when creating a partnership are:

- Ensure your core values and vision are aligned.
- Be willing to compromise and collaborate. Personality differences are fine, so long as they're managed, otherwise there will be conflict.
- Be clear on and continually review who is responsible for what so everyone is on the same page.
- Have a partnership agreement in place, including an exit strategy, so if things fold it is clear how to deal with it. If this is not established upfront it can be extremely disruptive, both financially and emotionally. A business that my company works with is going through a partnership split and has been trying to unwind things for two years. It has cost them in excess of \$200,000.

Why is it important for business owners to learn to understand their numbers?

The reality is that all businesses have a commercial dimension to them. Even not-for-profits have to be across their numbers, otherwise they won't be able to sustain what they're doing.

We have a client in the health and wellness industry who has struggled for a number of years with their business and financial performance.

“ ... obtain some knowledge of accounting basics so you can read numbers and financials. ”

They have a reputable name, great products and services and are well-respected in their market, but were not able to convert this into a profitable business.

This client was being outperformed by competitors offering lower quality products or services at higher prices and they couldn't understand why. We did some work with them around their numbers and ascertained the key metrics and drivers in their business, narrowing it down to one key driver; the number of people attending each event or training session.

By highlighting that one issue with numbers, we were able to shift the focus of the business to address it. In the last twelve months the client has gone from making little money to looking to make around a \$300,000 profit this year.

Remember, you can have a good product with happy customers but if it doesn't convert into profit then you're doing hard work for no financial reward.

Do you recommend business owners study accounting themselves?

No, not unless you're running an accounting business! What I do recommend is to obtain some knowledge of accounting basics so you can read numbers and financials.

The successful business people I've known either had a solid understanding of their numbers, or could rely on someone they trust to help if they struggle.

You don't have to learn how to prepare these numbers; that can be outsourced. A business owner should be focused on their business and their strengths, not on backend functions like accounting.

What's a profit and loss statement? Does every business need one?

A Profit and Loss Statement (P&L) shows the financial performance of a business over a defined period of time. It can either be high level or detailed but essentially it will show all the revenue coming in and all the expenses going out, with the bottom line being your net profit.

The P&L provides a summary of income and expenses from an accounting perspective (which typically differs to cash) and is usually prepared in accordance with accounting standards and principles.

A P&L should be structured to provide an accurate assessment of financial performance. For example, splitting out cost of sales (which are the variable costs directly related to revenue/sales) should be done properly to provide an accurate assessment of profit margin.

Every business definitely needs a P&L prepared at least quarterly, although having one prepared monthly or even weekly is preferable.

You also believe businesses should have a cash flow statement. What is a cash flow statement all about?

This is probably the most critical report in business, yet often overlooked.

A cash flow statement shows physical cash movement (inflows and outflows) in a business for a defined period of time. It should be broken into three components:

1. Operating activities, which details income (inflows) and expenses (outflows).
2. Investing activities, such as capital purchases, buying or selling assets, investing in shares or property, or investment income received.
3. Financing activities. These are cash inflows and outflows such as debt, capital raising, dividends paid. For example, borrowing \$50,000 would be cash in-flowing into the business. Any loan repayments going out would be cash outflows.

These three components of the cash flow statement add up to give total cash movement. The bottom line is net cash movement, which is then added to the opening cash balance to provide the closing cash balance for the period.

Understanding your cash flow statement is absolutely key and is something to update and monitor on a regular basis. It can take a while to be clear on your cash flow situation, depending on your business, but putting the time and effort into doing it is worthwhile.

What are your top five tips for improving your organisation's cash flow?

There are always tweaks and changes that can be made to boost your cash flow.

Create a cash flow forecast — This enables you to forecast cycles and predict your cash flow on a monthly basis for the upcoming year. It also allows you to anticipate the ups and downs.

Eliminate receivables/debtors, or reduce them as much as possible — Do this by having tight payment policies or setting up monthly direct debits for your clients. Make payment easy for them and encourage

early or on time payment. Utilise accounting systems and other online tools for invoicing and better debtor management.

If you have creditors or payables, utilise payable days — If an invoice gives you 28 days to pay, hold onto your money and wait until the deadline.

Tightly manage stock (if relevant) — Good inventory management systems will help you ensure you hold only what you need. Continually review stock for obsolescence. Balance this by having enough stock for demand, so as not to hurt client relationships and sales.

Have a cash buffer in place — There are peaks and troughs in cash flow so a general rule of thumb is to have three months buffer to get you through low times. This buffer can be in the form of excess cash, overdraft facilities, borrowing facilities, or credit cards, depending on your preferences.

When looking to purchase capital items, e.g. vehicles or IT equipment, consider options for funding that purchase. Using cash in the bank may have ramifications down the track. It may be better to consider financing options which can free up your cash flow to help business growth or go towards the buffer.

What are the steps to creating a budget that works?

A budget should show the detailed expected or targeted financial performance of the business for a future period, e.g. 12 months. It needs to reflect your goals and vision. It should be challenging enough to drive you but also be realistic. The steps to creating a budget that works are:

- Start with the end in mind. Think about where you want to be in five or ten years, whether you want a \$1 million, \$5 million or \$50 million business, and work backwards from there. Take five

years for example; you would work back on a high level year-by-year, in terms of how you see yourself getting there, then flesh out once you get down to the upcoming 12 months.

- Gather and analyse information. Get historical data, input from your team members and anyone who has an impact on line items, such as sales, team members, HR or the finance team.
- Determine what your revenue targets are, then look at costs. Separate costs into fixed versus variable. Fixed costs are overheads that generally won't change, while variable costs will typically correlate to your revenue. If selling a product, your variable costs will be the cost of sales of selling that product.
- Where possible, predict one-offs or potential events during the period, e.g. team member changes, moving premises, big marketing campaigns. You should factor those into the relevant month within the budget.
- Once the above has been fleshed out, get buy-in from your team before finalising. They need to be on board, otherwise the budget is unlikely to be achieved.
- Don't forget to factor in paying yourself. There should be a wage for the business owner at a market rate for what you do. This is a reasonably common thing with small business. The owner(s) put a lot of hard work into it but don't get the reward because they haven't budgeted for it.
- Review and assess that the budget is inline with the bigger picture, and that you're happy with it.
- Going forward, regularly track your performance against your budget. Do this at least monthly, if not more regularly. There is no point putting a budget in place then not looking at it for 12 months.

Are there any other financial statements or reports that we should be talking about?

On top of the P&L Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and Budget, there are three other reports that most businesses should be looking at regularly:

1. **Accounts Receivable (trade debtors) Report.** This lists in detail those who owe you money. Use this to monitor cash flow and bad debt. You want to keep track of who has outstanding debts and how overdue their payments are.
2. **Accounts Payable (trade creditors) Report.** Similar principle to the above, but it is a list of people you owe money and when it is due.
3. **Inventory Item/List Report** (if you're selling products) or a 'Work in Progress Report' (if you sell services and track time on jobs/projects).

The inventory item report lists your current inventory and enables you to assess whether you are carrying too little or too much stock. It also helps you monitor stock that is going out of date or difficult to sell.

A Work in Progress report is the equivalent report if you have a service-based business. This will give you a listing of the unbilled time that has been spent on your clients or jobs in your business, and enables you to monitor and assess whether this time will be recoverable.

Time that's not recoverable should be written off as it affects the figures in your P&L statement, as well as your cash flow. Make sure that you are billing time as quickly as possible.

“ Make sure that you are billing time as quickly as possible. ”

“ A good accountant or bookkeeper should help your business grow. ”

As your business grows, how do you know if you have enough money to hire an employee?

This is a great question, particularly for small businesses, and it comes back to your budgets and cash flow.

Take a look at your numbers to ascertain if they show room to support a new employee. Is there enough cash flow to finance that additional cost each month? If there is and it's the right decision for the business at that point in time then that's your answer. If the budgets and cash flow don't show room, you need to find a way to fund it.

The other question you need to ask is how confident you are that the new employee can directly or indirectly generate additional revenue, otherwise there's no point in hiring them.

How should a business go about finding a good bookkeeper or accountant?

First, research what makes a 'good bookkeeper' or 'good accountant' (they are different roles).

Speak to other business owners and ask about their experiences. Try to seek out those who are positive about their bookkeeper/accountant, and then find out why. A good accountant or bookkeeper should help your business grow.

Once you know what you're looking for:

- Start with your existing network and advisors and ask for a referral. Nothing beats a personal recommendation.

- Research online by looking at websites, blogs, social media and reviews.
- Find someone with relevant experience who can help you go where you want to go. Ideally someone who has worked with businesses like yours.
- Shortlist two or three and meet them if you can. Nothing beats talking face-to-face to get a sense of trust and connection. If not then Skype or phone them.
- Ask questions! Ask who they've worked with in your industry and why they do what they do, to get an idea of what they're about. Get a feel of how they use technology and software.
- Ask them how they communicate and charge. Assess if they fit with your values, beliefs and business needs. Check their background and qualifications, look at their LinkedIn profile, and confirm their registration as CA, CPA, IPA, etc.

Is understanding numbers really a job of someone's bookkeeper or accountant?

At the detail level yes, however, the business owner/director/CEO needs to understand the numbers at a higher level and be able to interpret key information.

The person in charge of the business signs off on the financials and tax returns and they are responsible from a compliance and a legal viewpoint. For this reason, they should be across the numbers and understand what they're signing off on.

A good example of this is a new client we had come on board recently. Being in building and construction, they had no understanding of their financials or numbers and were reliant on the work of the previous accountant. When we first did a review with them it became apparent

that the financials for the past three years were incorrect and had resulted in an overpayment of tax of approximately \$80,000.

This hurt the business's cash flow. It was stressful. They went through an unnecessary period of not having money and having creditors chase them, which was tough on them financially and emotionally. We've made progress with them now, which has had a positive impact.

Understanding numbers is also important from a legal point of view. Directors have a legal obligation under the Corporations Act to maintain financial records to ensure that their company is not trading insolvently. There are significant penalties around this which is why you need to work with your bookkeeper or accountant to stay across your financial statements.

Why is it important for business owners to use good accounting software?

There are a number of different accounting software systems out there, which can be used to help your business:

- Meet compliance and legal obligations, whether that's tax, GST, payroll, etc.
- Stay organised in dealing with your customers, suppliers, employees, etc.
- Become more efficient and free up the business owner's time, rather than doing it through multiple systems or manually through spreadsheets.
- Be more easily managed in order to grow. You can't make good decisions if you don't have good information to base those decisions on.
- Evaluate financial performance and position of the business at any point in time.

- Maintain good accounting records. A lot of finance brokers or lenders require financial information and reports, which usually require an accounting system to produce.
- Better manage cash flow.
- Reduce bookkeeping and accounting fees. If you're making the most of good accounting software you'll have accurate and up-to-date information, which will reduce fees and enable your accountant to provide more relevant and valuable advice.

If the business owner believes that they are paying too much tax, what should they do?

It is easy to pay too much tax without realising. To gain a clearer picture, first talk to your existing accountant. Here is a quick checklist of some of the questions you can ask:

- Is the business correctly structured for paying tax?
- Is the balance sheet clean and up to date?
- Is there opportunity to review asset lists, depreciation reports and schedules?
- Are all liabilities correctly accounted for?
- Is revenue being correctly accounted for and treated for tax purposes? Is there any flexibility in recognising revenue?
- Are all relevant expenses being claimed, e.g. business expenses being paid for personally?
- Are there any expenses that can be accrued or prepaid?
- Can you review and adjust depreciation rates?
- Is there a timing opportunity? For example, can they defer revenue or bring forward expenses to provide a better tax result?

- Are there any tax concessions, rebates or incentives available?
- What is the ability to split income?

You should also assess any money being taken from the business to review whether it's being done in the most effective way. This includes wages, directors fees, super, loans, etc.

Have this discussion with your current accountant and evaluate their responses. If you're not happy, get a second opinion. If possible, engage an accountant with relevant experience and expertise in your industry, as they may be able to identify more opportunities to save on tax.

Apart from business, are there any other asset classes you invest in and why?

Outside of business my main investment is property. I have dabbled in other investments (including stock and forex trading) and still have interests in a number of private and public companies, but property is my preference.

I love the tangible nature of property and the different options and strategies at your disposal as a property owner. Property also has one big advantage over other asset classes; leverage. There is no other asset class where you can borrow up to 95 per cent of the purchase price against the asset itself.

When property prices crashed in the USA during the GFC I travelled twice to the USA looking to invest. The AUD was strong, and I saw a good opportunity and invested in three properties there.

With these properties being cash flow positive I then focused on Australian property, particularly with the power of leverage which wasn't available in the US, due to being a non-resident. Within two years I bought 12 properties in Australia, including undertaking a

property development. I was able to do that due to the income earned through business, as well as utilising equity in each property as it grew.

The strategy was to fully utilise our borrowing capacity by leveraging and accumulating as much property as possible, which was reasonably cash flow neutral (i.e. didn't cost us a lot of money to hold). We can then sit on it long term and (hopefully) realise some good capital growth. As an accountant, I love the power of compounding capital growth not being taxed as it grows – unlike income where you lose a percentage to the tax office each year.

Property can be a reasonably low risk asset class with great potential upside. Investing in property helps build assets outside of the business and can contribute significantly to building and maintaining your wealth.

What are the most important things you have learnt about succeeding in business?

There are two key lessons I've learned through being in business and they are more intertwined than you may think.

First, recognise that business is about people. It is important to build foundations of trust and strong relationships with not just clients but with your team, your suppliers and other stakeholders. Those successful in business are able to build great rapport with the people around them. They prioritise their relationships both personally and professionally.

Integral to building strong relationships is genuinely understanding a person and not being superficial. You need to get to know what motivates the person in front of you, what they struggle

“ Those successful in business are able to build great rapport with the people around them. ”

with, where their knowledge gaps are, what they're afraid of and what they genuinely want.

Developing strong and durable relationships is a powerful tool in building a business because the way you relate with your team filters out to how they relate to your clients. An emphasis on solid and positive relationships results in people becoming advocates for you, and they become your best marketing resource.

That being said, the phrase, 'You can't run a business on love, trust and pixie dust,' is something that has stuck with me.

Just as relationships are close to my heart, so too are numbers. Businesses need to be commercial and in order to achieve goals there needs to be money, so understanding numbers is critical.

The biggest reason small businesses fail is due to cash flow. You need to understand what is coming in and going out, your key metrics and drivers, ratios, profitability and product/service margins. You need to know whether you are making money on each product or service, and which clients are making you money.

Clients I have seen to be successful understand their financials. They may not know how to prepare them but they know how to read them. They are often able to rattle their numbers off on the spot.

What is the best piece of business advice anyone has ever given you?

Something that has resonated with me, particularly since our business has acquired two other businesses over the last two years, is 'progress over perfection' from one of my mentors (and author of this book), Dale Beaumont.

Through the last two years we have gone through a massive learning curve. Being an accountant and coming from a technical background, I have always been a perfectionist, so this was a big one for me, as it required a shift in the way I perceived business processes and what I spent my time on.

I used to get bogged down trying to do everything perfectly when there wasn't enough hours in the day to achieve this. My mentor's advice helped me step back and consider whether it was worth getting each task 100 per cent right.

What recommendations would you make to an aspiring entrepreneur who wants to start their own business?

First, you need to have product-to-market fit. Start by getting feedback from potential customers, to see if there is interest in what you're offering and at the price you're offering it. There's no point building something you think is amazing if no one else wants it.

Next, be clear on why you're going into business. It's important to have strong purpose as you will draw upon it to get you through the tough times.

Business owners need to learn quickly and fail fast. Some things you'll try will work and some won't. Those who are successful are able to recognise early what doesn't work, before spending too much money, time or resources.

Take it from an accountant, if you're going to be in business, you need to understand your cash flow. Spend time on budgets and cash flow forecasts and have a buffer in place. There are curve balls in business and if you aren't on top of your cash flow you'll run out of money and time, no matter how good your product is.

“ If you find the right mentors you will make progress ten times faster. ”

Invest in your personal development and aim for continuous improvement. This is key because building, running and scaling a successful business usually requires different and broader skill sets to what the business owner does or is interested in.

Surround yourself with likeminded people and find mentors/coaches who have done what you are trying to do. Success leaves clues. If you find the right mentors you will make progress ten times faster.

The truth is that business requires hard work, sacrifice, energy, motivation and drive. It may not be easy but it should be rewarding.

Are there any significant quotes which you live your life by?

‘At the end of the day people won’t remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.’

– Maya Angelou

This resonates with me when it comes to relating with people, whether that’s clients, team members, prospects, friends or family. I try to be considerate of my actions and how I make people feel.

‘The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails.’

– John Maxwell

This one is important from a leadership perspective. I’ve always considered myself an optimist but optimism isn’t enough, you have to take action if you want results.

Another of my favourites is a biblical reference and one that I've incorporated into my personal philosophy, and that is, '*Give and you shall receive*'.

This is straightforward and a philosophy I've seen employed by successful business people. They genuinely aim to help and by putting others first it comes back to them.

Don't ask "what's in this for me?" but rather "how can I help someone?". Related to this is a quote by Winston Churchill, '*We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give*'.

Finally, one that fuels my aim to continually better myself is by Jim Rohn, a mentor of Tony Robbins: '*Don't wish it were easier, wish you were better. Don't wish for fewer problems, wish for more skills. Don't wish for less challenge, wish for more wisdom.*'

A big part of your philosophy is making an impact and giving back. Why is this so important to you and how have you incorporated this into your business?

I believe everyone has an obligation to contribute to society, to give and not just take. Those of us blessed with the privilege and opportunity that comes with living in a country like Australia have a responsibility to help those less fortunate.

Over the past two years, my business has done a lot of work on our vision, mission and values. Our purpose is to make a meaningful difference to the lives of our clients, their families and the community. We love to serve our clients and help them achieve their goals, but we also want to make a bigger difference.

A few years ago our business came across Buy1Give1 (B1G1), a global business giving initiative to create a world full of giving. They help incorporate giving into businesses in a meaningful, impactful and

easy way. With every tax return, email sent, new project completion, new client, or eBook downloaded, we donate to those most in need. Computer access, lifesaving water, playgrounds, schools and bicycles are just a few of the things we've been able to help with.

I was fortunate to experience a study tour to Cambodia in January 2017 with B1G1, where I experienced firsthand some of the projects we support and the incredible impact these projects make. It was a life-changing experience, and one that reinforced my belief that with privilege comes responsibility.



Mark during this study tour in Cambodia for B1G1

Free BONUS GIFT

Mark Williams has kindly offered a FREE BONUS GIFT valued at \$47.00 to all readers of this book.

The Top 30 Tax Minimisation Strategies — Think you are paying too much tax? This information-packed white paper is for you. Developed by Mark Williams and the team at Imagine Accounting, its purpose is to help you pay the least amount of tax legally possible. In it, you'll discover no less than 30 strategies that will help you keep more of your hard-earned money. These are strategies every single business can benefit from so take a look today.

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POWER PAIR



ANDY & ANGELA SMITH

“ As a business owner/entrepreneur you are in control of your own destiny, and as long as you see the ever-changing face of business as an opportunity, armed with the knowledge, tools and 'know-how', the future always looks exciting and life is incredible! ”

Andy & Ange Smith
XXOX

ANDY & ANGELA SMITH

Multi-award winning couple, Andy and Angela Smith, are Australia's leading authority on the transformation of trade businesses.

This entrepreneurially-minded couple built their plumbing business from the ground up. From small beginnings, Dr DRiP Pty Ltd has become a multi-million dollar company. The business was awarded #1 Trade Business in Australia by the National Small Business Champions Awards.

Having witnessed firsthand how good business practice can transform lives, Andy and Angela founded the Lifestyle Tradie Group in 2009, which was recently awarded #1 Educational Services Business in Australia. As passionate change leaders, this motivated couple have now helped thousands of trade business owners to earn more money, gain more time and get their life back with the help of practical business education.

Thanks to Lifestyle Tradie, business owners have discovered a smarter way to operate for more streamlined workflow and a dramatic increase in profit. The company's training creates a ripple effect, bringing incredible improvements to the daily lives of tradies and their families.

Lifestyle Tradie works with trade business owners from electricians and landscapers to pest controllers and garage door specialists. Working together, Andy and Angela share their knowledge to help create businesses that owners can scale, sell or run without being heavily involved.

With over 40 years of combined trade business experience, this down-to-earth, approachable Aussie couple are sought-after international speakers who are shaking up the trade industry with their philosophy to 'remodel your business to live the life you deserve!'

Throughout their careers, Angela and Andy have balanced working together with raising two children and managing their many sporting commitments. They have plenty of advice to share about how any couple can work successfully with each other.

What was your first business venture and what did you learn from it?

[Andy] After six years at TAFE completing my plumbing apprenticeship and licence, I was working as a subcontractor. At age 22, while playing competitive soccer, I snapped my cruciate ligament.

With six months until full recovery, no insurance and no money, I had no choice but to be back on the tools after eight weeks. The knee surgery forced me to start my own business sooner than I had planned as no company would take me on.

‘Andrew Smith Plumbing’ was born (not my proudest marketing effort). The only work I could do at the time was for \$20 an hour hobbling around the job site of a friend who was renovating.

I learnt business the hard way. I was working predominantly with builders who took advantage of my youth and naivety. On providing a quote they would say “That’s way too expensive!”, so I would ask, “What do you think I should charge?”.

I’m sure you can work out how that panned out ...

When the opportunity came to travel around Australia with Angela (now my wife), the decision to walk away from Andrew Smith Plumbing was easy. However, the lessons learnt from this first attempt at business were invaluable:

Always have insurance — This lesson was specifically in relation to personal income protection. This is a must if you work alone and don’t have a team to continue making money on your behalf should you be forced to put down the tools.

Only take on work you know will make you money — There is no point saying yes to work that is only breakeven or will send you backwards.

Collect money as fast as possible — Cash flow is king. Regardless of how profitable your company is on paper, if you don't have money to pay the bills it could send you to the wall.

The early struggles of business were hard and expensive but thankfully experienced when I had no financial overheads and no serious commitments. When I founded Dr. DRiP in 2000, I did it the right way!

In the beginning, what skills were you lacking and how did you close the gap?

[Andy] TAFE and university teach us to become a specialist in one area, such as a plumber, electrician, doctor or architect. As much as the technical side of learning rules and regulations is important, it is also only one side of operating a successful and profitable business.

TAFE provided little focus, if any, on things like marketing, hiring staff, technology, pricing, quoting for profit and customer service.

Interestingly, if you were to interview all the trades based students at TAFE and ask "What do you want to do when you finish TAFE?", 99.9 per cent of them would say "Start my own business".

Like every trade-based TAFE student, I lacked the skill set required to profitably (without the headaches and stress) operate a successful business. Funnily enough, I didn't realise I lacked these skills until our maintenance plumbing business, Dr. DRiP Pty Ltd, was a multi-million dollar company. I had a team of 17 people working from a 350 square warehouse in Sydney's Artarmon, and servicing the entire metropolitan area, but I didn't really know what I was doing.

On reflection, my previous bosses were the only learning platform I ever had, hence my own business foundations were modelled upon theirs. They were not necessarily open to providing advice, often

saying “You’ll be alright mate!”. They were probably secretly hoping I’d fail and come back to work for them.

When I started out there were very few, if any, trade business owners who could be trusted if I needed a sounding board before making a decision. I simply had to make decisions on my own and hope they would work. Some outcomes were in my favour and others would fail miserably.

For this reason, all the lessons were learnt through an expensive route of trial-and-error.

As the business grew, so did the headaches. An issue that was minor with a team of four or five was accentuated when the team tripled. In an era of no technology, the paperwork was overwhelming and the cash flow was poor. We had \$188,000 outstanding at one stage.

Having no tracking on the vehicles made dispatch incredibly difficult and the stress placed on my family was growing. We were making money, but the business was like a leaking bucket. It was out of control.

With a newborn at home, I was leaving before my baby Hannah woke and returning once she was in bed. Something had to give. The turning point was when Ange sat me down one day and explained that enough was enough. I’ll admit my response was not too favourable, storming from the house thinking ‘Everything I do, I do for the family!’. The truth was, Ange was right. Life wasn’t meant to be like this.

If we wanted things to improve, we knew we needed to do something different and get better at managing the business. In the early days there was no coach or education companies that helped trade business owners.

“ We were making money but the business was like a leaking bucket. It was out of control. ”

I needed someone who really understood the challenges I faced with a multi-million dollar business and a team of 17.

Ange and I read/listened to books and I attended many education programs covering marketing, finance and people management. I would be a sponge, then come home to Ange and together we would make it relatable to our trade business and implement changes.

In all, we invested well over \$150,000 to improve our skill set. We figured once we spent the money, the education couldn't be taken away from us. It was definitely the right investment. With our new knowledge, it took approximately a year to transform Dr. DRiP to a profitable and streamlined business where I was involved only one day a week.

**Some would say you were crazy to start a second business.
What made you decide to do so?**

[Andy] Trade business owners are the most honest, grounded, fun-loving bunch and are often driven by providing for their family. Sadly, they work far too hard and too long on the wrong things simply because they don't know any different.

These long hours, potential struggles with money and stress they experience on a day-to-day basis puts pressure on a couple and the relationship at home. It can all be avoided if only they knew what to do. They need the right guidance and a support network in order to take action and work smarter.

Having experienced this and seen the transformation we created, Ange and I knew there was life-changing power in our knowledge. We felt compelled to share it with other trade business owners to prevent them and their families from experiencing the same exhausting battles we had faced.

This is what drives us with our second business. At Lifestyle Tradie Group, we help trade businesses owners fast track business and lifestyle success. We mentor them to make more money and gain back time through the education and implementation of the Lifestyle Tradie Business Model.

Working with all trades, from electricians and landscapers to pest controllers and garage door specialists, we help create a business that is a true asset that they can scale, sell or run without being heavily involved. This ultimately provides the ‘freedom to choose’.

The business model is made up of four core business principles on which membership with Lifestyle Tradie is built — Platform, Money, Marketing and People.

Platform — This includes business planning, business processes, technology implementation and business systemisation.

Money — This includes how to record, monitor and interpret financial data for decision-making purposes, how to price profitably, manage cash flow and improve financial health.

Marketing — This includes creating marketing messages, learning online and offline marketing strategies, and developing sales and customer service skills.

People — This includes hiring, onboarding, training, motivating and retaining teams, as well as wellbeing advice, leadership and management skills.

In addition to providing education, we had a burning desire to create a support network for like-minded and savvy trade business owners and their partners around Australia and New Zealand.

Working in the trade industry can be very isolating for both the tradesperson on the tools and their partner who often works from

“Essentially, they would create a better life for them and their family.”

home. We believed there would be far greater benefit to the open communication of a community providing encouragement, asking questions and sharing their wins in a safe and trusted environment.

Ange and I believed that once the business owners we worked with started implementing their newfound knowledge and leveraging the support of our team and the Lifestyle Tradie community, they would be equipped and empowered for long-term business and lifestyle success. Essentially, they would create a better life for them and their family.

Like proud parents, there is nothing more motivating than hearing the business success and personal growth stories from our Lifestyle Tradie members, or seeing and feeling the close camaraderie of the community when we are all together at a live event. It's incredible knowing we have played a part in their transformational journey.

Starting our second business was definitely the right decision!

What are the most common mistakes trade business owners make in business?

There are a few mistakes that often surface:

1. *Claiming they are too busy to apply technology, or using this excuse for why they only understand and apply their job management platform at 50 per cent capacity* — I explain to trade business owners that managing every job through one platform is an immediate way to gain back control of your day. It will streamline the work, improve productivity with your team and should you have it connected to your cloud accounting program, it will drastically reduce workload.

2. *Not knowing their numbers or understanding the financial health of their business* — It is pretty common to hear a trade business owner say that the only time they see a Profit & Loss Statement is at the end of the financial year. Understanding and tracking past and present financial trends and determining future trends is critical if you want to own and operate a successful business. Not understanding your numbers and not having a handle on your cash flow can be the death of even the best business.
3. *Being too proud to ask for help or reach out for professional advice* — Trade business owners are exceptionally proud. They have built and operated their business single handedly for many years. The issue we find is they would rather bury their head in the sand, continue to go backwards and pretend everything is ok than reach out for professional advice. The thing is, we all know doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result is simply madness. My advice to all business owners is to not let pride get in the way of a profitable business, a happy marriage and stress-free life.
4. *A scattergun approach to marketing* — There are many business owners who have little understanding about their key target audience. Because of this, they throw money at an array of different marketing tactics (generally based on what their competitors are doing). From there, they are unable to quantify the response or return on investment. This also goes for those who continue to market simply because they've always done it that way. Habit is not a reason for making a business decision.
5. *Business growth with no systems* — Growth with no systems only creates added stress and pressure. It's no wonder there are so many trade business owners who grow in size only to scale back saying it is easier with a small team. If your business systems are all kept in your head, with each new team member the workload triples. Systems and procedures are the answer to true freedom.

Do you believe technology and software are important for running a trade-based business?

Adopting the right technology is a non-negotiable. It improves efficiency by allowing you to manage jobs. By using the right software platforms, you can also save time and reduce errors with things like accounting and customer care.

Most importantly, technology allows the flexibility to operate your business from anywhere in the world. Ange and I can be on holiday and log in to see what's happening should the need arise. In addition to this, our back office in the Philippines can take control after hours through immediate access to the job management program.

Technology has been the catalyst that provided us with the opportunity to expand our company to the Philippines. We have had a team working from an office in Cebu since 2012 and through the use of technology we can easily manage, train and stay connected with them.

When you and Ange first started working together what was one of your biggest challenges? How did you overcome this?

[Andy] We started working together for the first time in 2004 in a small second bedroom in a flat below my parents' home. Ange had resigned from her role as National Sponsorship Manager for Dairy Farmers after four years to help me work on Dr. DRiP. The team was growing with eight tradesmen and I felt the pressure to keep up with the increased workload.

The initial week was tough. I had been operating the business single-handedly for four years with Ange's involvement only through table talk over dinner. To actually make space for her was a whole new issue.

There were simple hurdles like desk space. Ange wasn't too impressed with my 'organised chaos' and the lack of space specifically for her.

This was an easy fix. Then there were larger issues, like having an argument because she placed an advertisement in the local paper without my involvement or approval.

In hindsight, I overreacted. From managing a budget of \$3.2 million, placing an ad for \$365 was somewhat insignificant to her. To me it had a whole different meaning — I was losing control of ‘my baby’. After my outburst, we agreed to work out the rules. Together, we decided who was in control of what area within the business and what we were able to do with/out discussion at our weekly meeting. This made working together a whole lot easier!

Andy, some say working with your partner can be tough. Having done this for over a decade, what are your top tips for making it work?

1. Communication is everything. Make sure to listen intently and be present (don't look at your phone during a conversation). Most issues between partners are due to unfulfilled expectations.
2. Work to your strengths and define your roles and responsibilities. This provides clear boundaries both for you and your team.
3. Share the responsibility of work and home equally. For example: If work deadlines are more pressing for Ange one week I will do more kid sport pickups / drop offs and prepare dinner. There are no stereotypical roles in our home.
4. Have clear boundaries between work and home. For example: Don't talk work once you are home (especially not in front of the kids), unless you ask permission first.
5. Take time out away from each other. Either a morning gym session or time away with friends. Ange takes a week with some girlfriends every year to Bali, Noosa or the like, and I head to Japan snowboarding every second year.

If you had to name one thing you did in business that made the difference to you allowing the business to run without you, what would it be?

Creating systems and procedures and implementing them with the team was key to me reclaiming my life.

[Andy] In the early stages of Dr. DRiP, everything was in my head. Being the bottleneck and having to be involved in every decision caused a lot of stress. Systems and procedures need to be designed and implemented to empower the incredible team you have around



you. Your team are often willing and able to step up and take on more responsibility if you relinquish a little control. Systems allow this to happen. Today, in Dr. DRiP everything has a step-by-step process to follow.

Accessibility is the next important piece. We have a cloud-based location where all staff members can access relevant training and we use a project management tool to hold people accountable for each task. All our systems, accessibility and accountability are wrapped in training to ensure everyone is clear about their responsibility and know how to complete each specific task.

When your team understands the expectations on them, miracles happen. Performance improves, errors are removed and productivity and efficiency increase ten-fold.

In addition to the immediate positive results experienced, you've set your business up to scale faster, you've radically increased the value of the business if you ever intend to sell and you've made the day-to-day operation easy to control.

This has single-handedly been the most impactful asset to providing a life of true freedom.

If systems are the key to reducing stress and creating freedom from working every day, why aren't more business owners implementing them?

Great question. Sadly, most business owners fail to understand the importance of systems or feel paralyzed by not knowing where to start. Some business owners think systems on their own will be enough. However, systems are useless unless you know how to educate with clarity on how to use them, and how to keep people accountable on a daily basis.

Personally, we have systems for both the tradespeople and the administration side of the business. We educate every new employee in the same way to ensure they understand the 'flow' of their role and how it fits in with and affects others around them.

The other critical part to this is the actual business owner learning to let go. They mistakenly think nobody can do things better than themselves. That may be true, but I will often ask, "Have you given them a go?"

What advice would you give to other entrepreneurs who may be going through a tough time right now?

Business is filled with challenges and tough decision making. It's the nature of the beast and the reason why you should deal with every difficult situation with these specific steps;

1. Situation occurs
2. Feel the emotion
3. Consider possible solutions
4. Take action
5. Let go and move on

When you are faced with a challenge you can get angry. You need to first own the feeling. Go for a run, find a punching bag or scream the house down, whatever you need to do to get it out of your system.

Then consider all your options, make a decision and execute. From that point on, don't dwell on it. Let go and move on! Mistakes are nothing but opportunities to learn, and success is the result of determination.

People say about you both that your greatest qualities are your energy and enthusiasm. How do you maintain this and stay motivated after over 20 years in business?

[Andy] Ange and I are both naturally high energy and positive people. If you get us on the subject of business, you'll hear the excitement and passion in our voice hit a whole new level. You won't be able to shut us up. We love business and just love what we do.

How can you not be motivated by seeing the transformation of hundreds of lives around Australia and New Zealand? It's not only the success stories of our Lifestyle Tradie members, but the impact we have on the trade industry as a whole that we are passionate about.

We are aware that the state of our health and well-being has a huge influence on our daily output and hence our energy levels. It is for this reason we are both health conscious and stick to some daily habits to help us feel fresh, stay focused and give our best every day. This includes things like sticking to a daily morning power routine, drinking as much water as possible, going to bed at 10:00pm every night and not drinking alcohol midweek. Like everyone, we can fall off the wagon at times, but we get ourselves back in line as quick as we can.

In addition to this, to maintain our enthusiasm for business, it certainly helps to take time out to create space to think and recharge our batteries. This can be holidays with the kids or scheduled time away from home, the kids and the routine. We also take time together to dream about the next five to ten years.

The right environment becomes important. We try to go somewhere relaxing and quiet, where we can see the expansive blue sky. At times, a beverage in hand can fuel an incredibly

“ We try to go somewhere relaxing and quiet, where we can see the expansive blue sky. ”

“ Why reinvent the wheel when others have been there and done that. ”

creative conversation! We encourage our members to do the same and take one extra day together after the Lifestyle Tradie two-day live event ‘Reignite and Reunite’. Our members claim our live events are one of the key ingredients to provide a surge in motivation and energy.

What are your top five tips to becoming a successful entrepreneur?

Never stop learning — It’s really easy to get complacent and to think you know what you are doing. With technology moving at the pace it is, there is always a better, more cost effective and efficient way to do something.

It will be beneficial for you to find someone in your industry who has successfully walked before you, and invest both time and money into being a sponge. Why reinvent the wheel when others have been there and done that.

Have unwavering self-belief and self-confidence — If you don’t believe you can do something or be someone, then no one will. Your belief in self comes first with respect to your abilities and decisions. From there, you need to be passionate about your cause.

It’s far easier to attract and retain team members when you are energetic, positive, motivated and confident. Your energy is contagious.

Understand your numbers — Track a financial dashboard and understand your return on investment in marketing and in other areas of your business. As the saying goes, ‘If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it’.

Define key role responsibilities and employ people who have strengths to match — It is important to understand your strengths and employ people who have strengths where you have weaknesses. Remember to employ attitude over skill. You can teach skill, but you can't teach someone to be friendly, have a positive attitude and be self-motivated.

Look after your health and wellbeing — As the saying goes 'Your health is your wealth'. Without it, you have nothing. What's more, don't forget to have fun!

What do you love most about being an entrepreneur?

Operating our business has allowed us the freedom to live the lifestyle we choose.

It allows us the flexibility to take a day out for the school carnival (as an example) and to go on holidays with the kids multiple times a year. We can create incredible memories while knowing the business is still operating profitably in our absence.

As the owner, you simply can't do everything yourself. You need to leverage your money to employ incredible people who believe in the vision and are as motivated as you to make a difference. With the right people you can achieve incredible things!

The part we love most about business is the opportunity to enrich the lives of so many trade business owners on a global scale. Thanks to Lifestyle Tradie, others have streamlined their operation, dramatically increased their profits and made incredible improvements to their daily lives.

As a business owner/entrepreneur you are in control of your own destiny, and as long as you see the ever-changing face of business as an opportunity, armed with the knowledge, tools and 'know-how', the future always looks exciting and life is incredible!

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Andy and Angela Smith have kindly offered a FREE BONUS GIFT valued at \$29.95 to all readers of this book.

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IT PAYS TO INNOVATE



SARAH ROSE BLOOM

“ One way I’ve overcome a fear of launching is by deciding what date my innovation should be commercialised ... Some of the details and images weren’t perfect but the products probably wouldn’t have launched for another six months if I hadn’t given myself a fixed deadline. ”

Sarah Rose Bloom

SARAH ROSE BLOOM

Sarah Rose Bloom was born in Melbourne in 1978 and raised a few hours up the freeway in the rural town of Swan Hill. Her childhood years were spent mustering cattle on horseback, breaking in racehorses and picking cut-flower roses on the family farm.

After finishing high school, Sarah spent several years away from home, first completing a science degree then teaching skiing in France and the USA. On returning to Swan Hill, she found few prospects for a qualified scientist. Keen to stay in the area, Sarah suggested to her mother that they reboot her property as a rose farm.

Challenges with freight and water-borne disease led Sarah to research value-adding alternatives to traditional roses. In 2004, after discovering a flower confetti farm in England, Sarah and her mother founded Simply Rose Petals, the southern hemisphere's first rose petal farm.

Simply Rose Petals has since won thirteen Australian Bridal Industry Awards which were voted on by brides themselves. The company's petals are exported to fifteen countries and have appeared on high rating television shows, including TV's *The Bachelor*.

Sarah has continually grown her business, conceiving and launching rose petal cannons, confetti cones and a world-first range of freeze-dried edible flowers.

In 2015, Sarah won the Veuve Clicquot New Generation Award and went on to represent Australia on the Global Farmer Round Table. In 2018, she was named as one of Australia's Top 50 Small Business Leaders.

Sarah has been named recipient of a Churchill Fellowship and a Nuffield Scholarship. These have enabled her to travel to nearly 40 countries to continue to research, innovate and grow her business.

Were you entrepreneurial as a child?

My family never mentions me having entrepreneurial talent, so I hadn't really given it a thought until a couple of years ago when I was reflecting on my childhood. I realised that I often had a money making enterprise on the go.

Ironically, my first two businesses as a kid involved drying rose petals. Their chief purpose was to make enough money for me to buy the next shiny item of saddlery for my pony.

My first venture was a bit of a disaster. I'd heard that you could dry rose petals in a microwave oven. After a few days of drying rose petals in our home microwave, my bags of rose petals were bought by a retailer called House & Garden. The grand total came to fifty dollars.

This was a huge sum to a nine year old kid in the eighties! I thought I was onto a real winner and I proudly prepared my next batch, only to be told my initial batch had gone mouldy.

Would you believe that nearly three decades later we still receive orders from brides who've tried drying rose petals in the microwave, only to find they've gone mouldy one or two days out from the wedding!

My next business involved air-dried rose petals instead. I would have been nearly ten years old when my distant relative, Aunt Dorothy, visited from America. We hit it off immediately despite our eighty year age gap. I was enthralled by her stories of world travel. Her parting gift to me was a stunning blue silk organza bag filled with delicate rose petals.

After showing my friends at school, I started hand stitching my own version of the rose petal bags. I had a little stand at the school gate on days after school and my friends used to buy them for their mothers and grandmothers. Dorothy's organza bag is still a prized possession of mine today.

“ This wasn’t even being considered in the southern hemisphere at the time. ”

What made you decide to start your current business?

I had lived away from my home town of Swan Hill for seven years by the time I returned from uni, ski instructing and travelling overseas. Local employers assumed I wouldn’t stick around and my science degree wasn’t really fit for jobs in the region.

Mum and I were playing in a tennis tournament together in a tiny country town called Nhill. I was lamenting the fact that I couldn’t find a professional job in Swan Hill and wondered how I was going to keep living there.

During my high school years Mum had owned a small business growing air-dried roses for the popular dried flower trend in the nineties. Although she hadn’t produced for a few years, there were still about one thousand plants growing on our farm. I suggested that we go into business together and start growing roses.

The rest is history!

How did you discover the opportunity to focus more on the petal side of your rose selling business?

When Mum and I started Simply Rose Petals we planned to grow cut flower roses for regional florists. Our first crop was a complete failure because we had a problem with the river water which caused the roses to wilt not long after being picked.

One night I started searching online for other ways in which roses could be used. I discovered a farmer in England who was growing

flower petals specifically for wedding confetti. This wasn't even being considered in the southern hemisphere at the time.

Wedding venues were starting to ban paper confetti because it stained and although it was a very niche market at the time, I could see that ecommerce could make global business a real possibility from a rural location.

How did you test the viability of your product and confirm you were onto something big?

Not long after we'd discussed the idea for rose petal confetti, Mum and I were shopping in Melbourne when we saw a poster advertising Australia's largest bridal expo. We phoned the number on the poster straight away and a couple of hours later we were sitting down with the expo's coordinator discussing rose petals.

The coordinator was very excited about our idea as she'd never seen anything like it before in Australia. We managed to negotiate dramatically reduced rates for our first bridal expo which was only three weeks away.

I don't think I've ever worked as hard as I did then. In three weeks, we managed to pull together an entire product range and packaging, and to hand-make Australia's first rose petal cones. We designed and printed business cards, created a catalogue and built a simple website. On top of that I was still working part-time at the local bank. I decided that I would resign from my job if the expo was a success.

Over two thousand brides attended the expo that weekend and it felt like Mum and I had personally spoken to every single bride! It wasn't like today where you pick up a bridal magazine and there are photos on every second page of rose petals being thrown. Nobody had ever heard of using rose petals at a wedding and we spent hours explaining how they could be used and what our cones were for.

By the end of the weekend Mum and I were exhausted, but there was no doubt that there was demand for our rose petals. On Monday morning, I resigned from my part-time job and at 9:16am on the first day of full self-employment I took our first sale of rose petals. It was just enough money to cover my rent for the week.

Once you got the product right, how did you go about marketing something people hadn't even heard of?

Our first step was to educate brides as to why they even needed rose petals at their wedding. After all, you won't think to look for rose petals if you've never heard of them being used!

By exhibiting regularly at Australia's biggest bridal expos we were able to help brides and wedding industry professionals understand how rose petals could be used. It was costly for a new business as expenses included travel, accommodation, site design and the site fee.

Brides typically start planning their wedding months or even a couple of years before their big day. So it was a matter of first creating the demand for rose petals and then marketing them. Once brides started looking for rose petals of their own accord, we found listing on bridal directories was helpful too.

When your product is as innovative as our rose petal cannons and cones were, there is no such thing as an overnight success. It takes time for adoption of new products. Time is costly for a new business, so you must be in it for the long haul to give your innovation its best chance.

What other challenges did you face in the early days of growing the petal side of the company?

Wedding industry professionals and brides loved our rose petals from the beginning, but many others were still quite negative about the

concept. The way I see it, the more innovative your idea is, the more you'll hear that it won't work. However, this probably means you're onto a winner.

Once we had validated our products at the bridal expo we were one hundred per cent committed. We were so passionate about what we were doing that it was hard not to take it personally when people were critical of our business.

The agricultural industry is very male-dominated and I was once told in an interview for a farming scholarship that, "My wife dries rose petals on the backseat of her car on the way to tennis and you expect me to believe that people will pay money for these".

Six years later, the very same organisation phoned and emailed me multiple times asking me to re-apply for their scholarship.

Today, it's quite different. Every person and their dog thinks rose petals are a great idea. The research I've released about the rose petal industry has created a very competitive environment.

This is great for building awareness and momentum, but unfortunately not everyone has the same respect for quality and creating beautiful products that we do. It's quite heartbreaking to see some of the rubbish being produced now and sold at unsustainable prices.

The most disappointing thing is that poor quality and lack of understanding of the freeze-drying process can give freeze-dried rose petals a bad name. When freeze-drying is done correctly, you will struggle to tell the difference between fresh and freeze-dried produce. I've even had close friends phone me when they receive their freeze-dried rose petals, convinced that I've sent them fresh petals by mistake and checking that they don't need to go in the fridge. It's about continually educating your customers and staying committed when people don't see the potential in your idea.

More recently you've entered a whole new category which is edible rose petals. Where did this idea come from?

Since the very beginning we have received the occasional enquiry for edible rose petals so it was always something I was experimenting with in my own kitchen. It wasn't until the popularity of cooking shows along with the culture of sharing food photos on social media, that I really saw a rise in demand for edible rose petals.

Through a scholarship I was fortunate to travel to 21 countries overseas researching all the possible uses for edible rose petals. During my travels I discovered many possibilities with edible flowers and was reporting my findings back home regularly. By the time I returned home we already had some new edible flower crops in the ground!

The market for edible flowers is quite different to your market for brides, so how did you go about finding the whole series of new customers for this new product?

It feels like we are repeating the entire process of educating our customers and fine-tuning our product all over again but that's what innovation is about. The difference is that this time our products are a world-first instead of a first for the southern hemisphere.

The difference with marketing an innovative product now as opposed to a decade ago is the power of social media. New products and ideas spread much more rapidly through social media so having a physical presence at an expo or a retail shop isn't as necessary as it once was.

Allocating enough time for marketing the edible flowers has been a challenge. Instead of focussing all my effort on one product range, it feels like I have two businesses to concentrate on, with two different target markets.

We have been fortunate with the edible flowers that social media has created the demand for our product almost organically. It's really become a matter of educating customers about the benefits of using freeze-dried edible flowers instead of fresh edible flowers.

To be able to leave a jar of our freeze-dried edible pansies on the bench for three months without refrigeration makes life a lot easier for your high end cocktail bar. They can have the visual appearance of fresh flowers for their cocktail garnish without the need for refrigeration and the wastage that goes with it.

When we have new customers I try to speak with them on the phone to explain how to get the best results from our products. Finding influencers on social media and sending samples is also a great way to showcase products and educate users.

Do you get frustrated with others copying your ideas?

The commonly held view in the business world is that you know you're onto a good thing when others start copying your ideas. This is all well and good but I usually know I'm onto a good thing well before that happens. If I'm totally honest, it really frustrates me when others blatantly copy our ideas.

Since our very beginning we have been copied. We've had our website plagiarised word for word and even our branding and colour scheme replicated exactly. The worst thing is seeing our competitors copy our work, only to provide inferior products and charge half the price for them. Poor quality gives a new industry a bad reputation and is so damaging because people are yet to see what a good product looks like.

“ If I'm totally honest, it really frustrates me when others blatantly copy our ideas. ”

So whilst most people will tell you that copying is a form of flattery, I struggle to understand why anyone would choose to copy or plagiarise another person's work when the real joy is in innovating and creating something you can be proud of.

You also run a business which involves several family members. What are some of the challenges around mixing family and business?

Not only do I work all day with my mother, we also live on the same farm. Our respective houses are a few hundred metres apart, but Mum can still see into my office directly from her kitchen.

I remember when I first moved into my house it was not uncommon for Mum to phone me up at one in the morning to say, "What on earth are you still doing working at this hour? You need to get to bed." I had to remind Mum that I wasn't her little girl anymore!

It can be really difficult separating business from family. Mum and I are so enthusiastic about our business that we could easily talk about it all day and all night, which gets pretty exhausting for other family members. It also doesn't respect the fact that Mum and I need to have a mother-daughter relationship and not just one of business partners.

From the day we started our business, I have managed the business finances. It made sense because it fitted more with my role. Initially, it was difficult for Mum because she felt that her finances were in the control of a 25 year old and in hindsight, I certainly felt a great sense of responsibility for that.

Mum really put a lot of faith in me from day one. That has been the beauty of family business. There is nobody I would trust more than my amazing Mum. I couldn't imagine founding a business with anyone but her.



Sarah with her amazing mum and business partner

What are your top tips for doing business with your family?

Mum and I are quite different from each other personality-wise, although as I get older I find myself noticing our similarities a lot more. Our differences have made us successful business partners because we complement each other well, but they have also caused the greatest amount of friction.

I would say that you really need to understand yourself and your family members. Understand how you're different and where you complement each other. Undertaking an intensive leadership program can be a really great way to do this. The key is to then share your learnings with your family members and your team.

Conflict is an inevitable part of business but there are good and bad ways of handling conflict. So another tip would be that you need to understand how you and your family members handle conflict. First understand, then you can work out how to improve.

One of the components of a leadership program I attended was crucial conversations where we identified conflicts with family members. We

“ Most of my best ideas have come through travel and getting out of the office. ”

role-played the conversations that we needed to have and identified the best way to bring issues into the open. It was very powerful and I still use the technique today.

Finally, when working with family I would say it's critical you identify early on what your roles and responsibilities

are. That's not to say that you can't interchange at times, but it's important that each family member knows when the buck stops with them.

Mum and I established our roles in the very beginning based on our strengths and our natural inclination to certain areas. It has served us well because when there's a disagreement that seems unresolvable, it is always clear who has the final say.

What are your top tips for a business that wants to become more innovative?

Two pieces of advice for entrepreneurs are to read voraciously and to travel. Expose yourself to as many different experiences as possible. Most of my best ideas have come through travel and getting out of the office. It's a great way to kick your creative side into gear.

If you have family commitments that prevent you from travelling, you can still commit at least 30 minutes a day to reading. Put your phone down and pick up a book or choose a magazine that you wouldn't normally read so you can learn something outside the everyday norm of your business.

Another tip: Don't talk about your new innovation too much before taking action. It can be easy to hash over every little nuance until it

begins to feel that it will never be good enough to sell. Don't make the mistake of thinking that if you're talking about innovation, you're doing it. Nothing beats action.

There is no such thing as the perfect launch and the perfect product. Who knows where trends and technology will take us in one year, let alone two? Your product doesn't have to be perfect for you to begin selling it. This has been the toughest adjustment for me and I'm still a work in progress!

I am very particular about every detail and with a million ideas flooding my mind every day, I barely have a product launched before I can think of twenty ways that I could make it better. I have had to learn the hard way that there will always be room for improvement but if you keep modifying it time and time again before you actually launch it, then someone else will beat you to it.

Many of the best improvements to my innovations have come from customer and employee suggestions so another tip is to listen to your customers and your team. It can be easier for them to identify necessary modifications because it's not their 'baby'.

Lastly, pick a date and share your innovation with the world. One way I've overcome a fear of launching is by deciding what date my innovation should be commercialised and then as that date nears, committing to a media interview where the new product will be discussed.

As a result of this, I've found myself proofing new products on our website only moments before a telephone interview. Some of the details and images weren't perfect but the products probably wouldn't have launched for another six months if I hadn't given myself a fixed deadline.

Your business has won several awards, why is this so important to you?

When your business sounds quite foreign to most people, winning awards is a fantastic opportunity to open doors and give you credibility.

It was very important to Mum and I that we showcased our business professionally and differentiated ourselves from the perception of rose petals being a cottage industry.

Through winning business awards I have met with some of the most brilliant business minds in the world. There is no way I would have met them by sitting in my farm office. Some have gone on to unofficially mentor me and others have become customers.

Awards also give you credibility in your customers' eyes and we have been very fortunate to have won 13 Australian Bridal Industry Awards. These are voted on by brides themselves so the awards give brides-to-be the confidence to purchase from you.

I also like to think that awards have helped me to share my story and inspire other young women in rural areas to grow a business and to innovate.

Reading about someone having success from a rural location can help you visualise yourself having the same success if you're rurally located as well. It's very important to me that my story serves to inspire other women and men to take the chance as an entrepreneur.

Do you believe other business owners should submit their business for awards?

Business awards can give you experiences and opportunities that you don't even imagine when you're entering them. I wholeheartedly

believe that business owners who love what they do and want to grow their business should submit for awards.

When I became the inaugural winner of the Veuve Clicquot New Generation Award, we gained phenomenal national and international media exposure that otherwise would have been out of our budget.

The award gave me the opportunity to meet the other finalists in the year when I received the award, including Emma Isaacs of Business Chicks, Tina Tower (who also has a chapter in this book), Amy Marks of TOM Organic and Jodie Fox from Shoes of Prey.

Even if you don't expect to win, I would encourage you to enter business awards. There hasn't been a single award that I've won where I actually expected to win! Often, it's the exercise of writing the application and evaluating your business from an outsider's perspective that is the most valuable part of the awards process.

What has been the most intimate and hardest self-reflection question that you've had to ask yourself?

After my divorce I lost a bit of direction. I no longer had a family to provide for, who needed me. Without a family I couldn't see what the point to all my hard work and long hours actually was. There have been times in my life when I have lived extremely frugally and survived on very little so I knew that I didn't need much for myself.

I started contemplating going to work for someone else on minimum pay with minimum responsibility and minimum stress. There was plenty of stress in my personal life so I figured I could do without the added pressure of running a business. But I just couldn't bring myself to do this. I had to ask myself the hard question of what I really wanted.

A few things stopped me from calling it quits and taking the easy option, including my love for the business and a reluctance to leave my mother in the lurch.

After some deep self-reflection I finally came up with the answer that made the most sense in terms of what I wanted, which was freedom. I really appreciated being free to pursue my ideas, to structure my work day as I pleased and to create new things.

Business comes with a lot of responsibility and there are often tasks that you have to complete which don't really excite you. There is the added burden of a great sense of responsibility to everyone in my team. However, business gives you the true freedom to create, whether that be coming up with your ideal product, devising your ideal workday or creating your destiny.

Before starting Simply Rose Petals you completed a science degree. Has a degree helped you or would your time have been better spent in business?

Before my science degree, I spent a year studying for a tourism degree. Oddly enough, the reason I transferred to science was because I felt that I wasn't challenged enough. The business and marketing subjects were common sense to me and not something I felt I should be paying to study.

At the time, I didn't realise that business and marketing aren't common sense to everyone. Those subjects were just my natural forte.

I decided to make things more difficult for myself and transferred to science to study chemistry, physics, mathematics, anatomy and physiology instead. This was definitely a challenge considering I hadn't even given science subjects a thought since high school.

Completing a science degree was the best thing I could have done. Once I started Simply Rose Petals I realised how useful my science degree was. It taught me how to research and develop anything — an invaluable skill for innovating.

When our first two 1.5 tonne freeze dryers arrived at the farm by road train, I realised Mum and I were truly on our own. My science degree was a godsend in learning the process of lyophilisation and refrigeration mechanics.

Aside from research skills, my time at university gave me life skills and was a great precursor to entrepreneurship.

Is there a significant quote or saying which you live by?

During a trip to America, I was wandering through downtown Columbus when I came across a quaint little shop selling all sorts of quirky gifts. The first item I picked up was a magnet which read:

‘Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.

So throw off the bowlines.

Sail away from the safe harbour.

Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover.’

Anon

I couldn’t resist buying the magnet and today I have the quote in a frame on my bedside table as a constant reminder to step outside my comfort zone and not leave this world with any regrets.

What do you see as the major opportunities in business in the near future?

I have a background in science and innovation so I'm always fascinated by new technology. I love reading articles on websites like Futurism.

I am a strong advocate for blockchain technology. The opportunities it will offer businesses in the next decade are mind-boggling. Blockchain technology and smart contracts are being used to develop marketplaces for artificial intelligence, sustainable energy trading and genomic data-hubs. It's an exciting time to be in business and it reminds me of my early days in ecommerce.

There are also many opportunities in agriculture, from the farmer producing the food to the person building unmanned drones for aerial spraying. With a growing population and a changing climate, we have challenges around how we're going to feed so many people with less land and less water. If your business can work on solving these problems, it should have a great future.

Personally, I can't wait until I can jump in my driverless car and be working away on the road to a meeting in Melbourne!

What do you say to people who think it is too late to get into business?

You've only missed the boat if you never actually begin. I've struggled with a fear of missing out my entire life. When I started Simply Rose Petals, at age 25, I discovered a whole new exciting world of business books and self-development. I was worried that I'd missed the boat because I'd had seven years since I'd left school where I could have been in business. In my mind, I could have been retired by 25 instead of just starting out!

Imagine if that had put me off starting?

If business is your true calling, then you shouldn't worry that any age is too late. Don't leave any stone unturned, because, as the quote from the previous question said, 'Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do'.

My mother started Simply Rose Petals with me when she was 53 and she's still working full-time in our business today.

CONSISTENT ACTION



MARK OTTOBRE

“ I've had years in business where almost everything I touched went right. I've also had years where almost everything I touched went wrong. I gain much more wisdom when it goes wrong than right because it gives me insight into how to grow my business to reach new levels. ”

Mark Ottobre

MARK OTTOBRE

Born in 1985, Mark grew up in Melbourne's East Doncaster. Throughout his childhood, Mark was known as the dorky fat kid — earning himself the nickname 'Pork Chop'. Unhappy and lacking confidence, he spent much of his childhood alone, playing video games and watching WWE wrestling on television.

Mark's turning point came at age 14, when he discovered the world of health and fitness. Determined to rid himself of his unflattering nickname, he began training daily after school. From this point on, he proved himself by committing to learning and working harder than everyone else.

The hard work paid off and Mark was able to transform both his body and develop his confidence. After countless hours spent working out and pouring over the latest bodybuilding magazines and nutrition guides, it was obvious that what began as a way to lose weight, had ultimately turned into a way of life.

Buoyed by a single-minded goal to empower people through health and fitness, Mark decided to devote himself to personal training; to perfecting his craft and actively improving the lives of his clients. Like all business successes, true success comes at a price: determination, commitment, application and resilience. Hard times, when they came, made him harder.

Fast-forward to today, Mark is one of Australia's most successful and sought-after personal trainers. His studio, Enterprise Fitness, boasts a team of 17 staff and a 7-figure turnover. Mark has coached elite athletes at the highest level, hosted sold-out seminars and published several eBooks. He has followed up on his success by launching Wolfpack, a successful mentoring program for the next generation of personal trainers.

Not bad for a fat kid from the eastern suburbs!

What is Enterprise Fitness and how is it different?

As Melbourne's leading and most in demand personal training studio, Enterprise Fitness redefines everything you know about fitness.

I like to think of it as the Louis Vuitton or Rolls Royce of personal training. My standard and what I demand is excellence. In the words of one of my clients; *'It's like being a part of greatness.'*

I opened in Richmond, an inner suburb of Melbourne, surrounded by many other gyms. I never went in with the intention of competing head-to-head, but rather to create something unique.

My knowledge, know-how and passion sets my personal training studio apart. I've gotten results for athletes at high levels and I've taken that knowledge and distilled it for the average gym-goer, with amazing results.

How is it different specifically?

There's a number of reasons my business is different:

1. *We offer the best of both worlds* — I've worked in a few different gyms over the years, whether it be big box gyms or locally owned studios, and there were things that I loved and hated in each. In big gyms, I loved the professionalism, the cleanliness and the structure. In locally owned gyms, I loved that everyone knew each other by first name. It felt like a community where people came together to train hard. I wanted Enterprise Fitness to offer the best of both worlds. We give people 'hardcore' results, but in a close-knit and professional environment where people don't feel intimidated.

2. *We're 100 percent private* — No memberships. No walk-ins. No using the equipment on your own. I wanted to strip away all the things I hated about gyms until all that was left was a place of complete joy; a place that was void of all the 'riff raff'; where random people would walk in, be rude, or eyeball you if you were working with a particular client. The result is a place where people challenge themselves to be the best they can be.
3. *Minimum commitments* — Our training packages are minimum 12 week commitments. Why? Because we need at least 12 weeks working with you to deliver a head-turning result. After working for over a decade as an elite trainer, I know what it takes to achieve the best outcome for my clients. The 12 week commitment was something I drew a line in the sand about, refusing to accept 'single sessions'. It was not only great for client results but also proved to be good for business.
4. *Premium equipment* — From my experience, most gyms are equipped with low grade equipment. This just wasn't going to cut it for me. So I saved up (the banks didn't want to loan me any money) and only bought the best of the best, because if I was going to open up a studio, it had to be a place that I would personally want to train at.
5. *It's a labour of love* — In building Enterprise Fitness, I developed a product and service that was unique. Many have tried to copy my model, but they fall short every time. Enterprise Fitness represents my love for training and it's uniquely me. Because of that, it's not a business that can be franchised, nor do I want it to be. We're not about churning out clients with cookie cutter models that can be replicated or franchised just to make more profit. We're focused on being the best that we can be and we're constantly evolving and improving our service to raise the standard of personal training in Australia.



One of the many success stories of Enterprise Fitness

What skills were you lacking when you started out and how did you close the gap to find success?

I was never going to let a lack of knowledge about sales, marketing, management or anything else stand in the way of achieving my goals.

I have had my fair share of failures between starting out as a personal trainer and creating a seven figure personal training studio. However, every failure gave me the opportunity to bridge the gap in my skills.

When I started training clients, I was earning between \$16 and \$20 as an employee and working for the gym. Even though I was working day and night, clocking up 60 to 70 hours a week training and sourcing clients, my biggest paycheck was only around \$400. After around five months, the company changed its framework so that all personal trainers became subcontractors, renting the facility for \$1100 per month.

“ Living like this taught me business discipline and the meaning of hard work. ”

I was scared of the \$1100 per month rent, but it gave me a foot in the door as a business owner. From there, my career was a buffet of failures and lessons spread over five or six years.

When I became a subcontractor, I began to develop an interest in personal and professional development. I started doing numerous courses on a variety of different topics, learning the skills that would later help me create, build, and manage a seven figure, results-based personal training studio.

To share an example, my first real business failure was an online membership site called The Alpha Body. I got the idea from a seminar and figured if I charged clients \$47 per month, I would only need 425 members to earn \$20,000 per month. Simple!

I committed to building the site and program. I even invested \$20,000 in a 12 month business mentoring group. This was despite the fact that my taxable income was roughly \$25,000 the previous year.

Logically, I should have never joined the program. However, it gave me a do-or-die reality.

I was serious about making The Alpha Body membership site work. I wrote 48 eClasses, each around three thousand words. I lived like a recluse, cut off from any social activities and had an extremely tight budget.

Gym, business and entrepreneurship became my 24/7. It had to be if I was going to prevail. Living like this taught me business discipline and the meaning of hard work.

Despite investing so much into The Alpha Body, it was still not delivering the success I had envisioned so I figured I needed a low

barrier to entry product. I repurposed some of my eClasses to create my first eBook, *The Truth About Supplements*.

The book sold about 35 copies upon its release, then around one to two copies per week afterwards. A highlight from this venture was selling 50 copies in a weekend from an affiliate deal, however the deal included me giving away 80 per cent of the profits.

After many months of continuous, fruitless effort on *The Truth About Supplements*, I'd had enough. I was stuck behind a computer, drafting and testing ad copy and landing pages, when my real passion was to be in the gym.

So, I let all of it go, both *The Alpha Body* and *The Truth About Supplements*. If you Google either of these, you won't find the websites because I took them both offline. I wanted to be a champion trainer, not an online marketer.

This first venture was a failure but was still a massive step forward to my eventual business success. From there, I started again and rebranded myself as Maximus Mark (I thought my last name Ottobre was too hard to pronounce).

I started a blog and a podcast show, but more importantly, I focused on my craft: training, nutrition, getting head-turning results and helping clients win. This did more for my business than any of the online ventures.

It was when I combined the results I was getting for clients with the business savvy I'd developed that things really started to take off for me.

My recommendation to aspiring business owners is to go out and dare to fail. Fail small so it doesn't kill you and fail early so it takes the pressure off having to get things right.

How did you go about hiring people who care about your business as much as you do?

I believe it's important to have a strong brand, strong work ethic and uncompromising standards. I have high expectations, and a clear vision of what I want from my trainers and I lead by example.

As a leader, I'm up front and brutally honest. What you see is what you get. This can divide a lot of prospective employees (people either love my approach or hate it), but they always know where they stand with me.

I don't believe in micromanaging my staff either. To repay their efforts, I afford them a great deal of independence and ownership over their role. I encourage them to treat the business as their own, I offer opportunities for personal and professional growth and I take the time to understand what makes them tick.

Despite this, sometimes I simply burn people out. There have been times where people needed to leave because they couldn't keep up. My business is about A+ players. We're working to raise the standard of our whole industry and we need to set the example.

Most entrepreneurs struggle when it comes to letting go.**How have you been able to get over this?**

On an emotional level, letting go has been very easy for me. There are things I don't enjoy doing, so I focus on what brings the most income and enjoyment and I try my best to delegate the rest.

Having said that, doing this on a professional level can be very challenging. In the past, I've delegated tasks and walked away only to have them not completed to a satisfactory standard. This is why checks and follow ups on tasks are vital, because these kinds of mistakes can cost you in the long run.

As an entrepreneur, you need to accept that you may be competent at many things within your business, but that doesn't mean you should do all of them.

There's a saying; 'jack of all trades, master of none'. It means if you're too busy micromanaging every detail, you'll miss the big picture. Instead, focus on the tasks that you enjoy the most and which will generate the most income.

What's your approach when one of your staff makes a mistake in your business?

Even the best employee will make mistakes along the way. I guide my staff as much as possible and encourage them to take ownership over their decisions (and their stuff ups).

I have simple policies in place with trainers when they make a mistake. For example, if they double book themselves or cancel a session at the last minute, they owe the client a free session for which they won't get paid.

For the admin team, it depends on the mistake and how forthcoming they are. If they own it, I work with them to help put systems in place so it won't happen again. If they attempt to shift the blame or take an 'it wasn't me' approach, they don't typically last long in my business.

Mistakes are a part of the game. What's more important to me is what my staff member is going to do to make it right. If you make a mistake, don't come to me with the problem, own it and suggest a possible solution. The way people handle mistakes provides a valuable insight into their character and their ability to handle stress in times of difficulty.

“ Even the best employee will make mistakes along the way. ”

You also do a lot to give back to other up-and-coming people in your industry, why do you do this?

There were initially three main drivers behind my decision to support personal trainers who are new to the industry:

1. Further education courses for trainers (beyond Cert III and IV) were of a very low standard;
2. I wanted to share the things I wished someone had taught me when I started; and
3. I started to hear the same questions over and over from different trainers.

The more successful I became as a trainer and businessman, the more people would turn to me for advice. When I was starting out, my goal was to raise the standard of the health and fitness industry — what better way to do this than by setting the example and paying it forward to the next generation of trainers.

As your team is growing even further, you had to go from just management to leadership. In your opinion, what is the difference between the two?

Management lies in the details and implementing processes and procedures to keep things running smoothly. Leadership is about looking at the big picture and getting people inspired and aligned to work together. I think of leadership as ‘project’ focused and management as ‘process’ focused.

I am a much better leader than manager. I can create and sell the vision. My weakness is following up with the details, because I’m always too focused on the big picture.

What are your practices for onboarding new recruits?

When it comes to recruiting new trainers, the initial onboarding process is to invite and observe. I don't care about what people say; I care about what they do.

My initial interviews with trainers are very short. I almost always give them shadowing hours before inviting them for a proper interview. I want to see how they engage with the staff, the members and with me. I do this because it's time efficient to pull any unsuitable applicants early.

Do they ask smart questions? Do they seem disinterested? Do they make an effort to get to know everyone? Do they fit into our company culture? Are they on Facebook instead of speaking to the people around them?

Additionally, if I'm running a course, I will often get them to come along. I am looking for a very specific type of trainer. If they attend the course and don't ask questions or engage with the content, they're not the right fit for the business.

I've had a few trainers beg for jobs and say all the right things only to find that when I put them through this process, they fall short of delivering or don't fit into our culture of excellence.

What is the biggest mistake you've ever made in business and what did you learn from it?

As yet, I don't have a 'biggest mistake'. I've made many, many mistakes and each of them has taught me a valuable lesson.

Every mistake feels like 'the biggest' at the time. After a while, you begin to realise it's simply just a bump in the road towards greater things.

“ I will stick to the plan unless its purpose is no longer needed. ”

There are always trade-offs in business and decision making. Decisions will never be ‘mistake proof’ as mistakes themselves are a matter of perception. Was it a mistake? Or was it a lesson to learn in order to proceed to the next level?

To date, some of the most valuable lessons I’ve learnt involve staffing and people.

The balance I try to achieve is to be good to your team without compromising your standards. I have learnt; hiring the right people and having processes for managing them reduces many staff issues or prevents issues from arising.

What were some of the challenges you had to overcome on the journey to achieving your personal and business goals?

Aside from having to learn business skills like sales, marketing, administration and management, I think the core challenge for me is the mental issue of the following two questions:

1. Am I good enough?
2. Can I really pull this off?

Goals are designed to stretch and challenge us and thus I still deliberate with these two questions when I find a new goal that stretches me.

For me, once I get over self-doubt and see a goal clearly, I’ll move mountains to make it happen. So being able to answer yes to the above two questions is still the biggest ongoing challenge I face as once decided, the path is obvious.

Were there any times that you wanted to give up? What got you through?

I have considered giving up more than once.

I'm not a Navy Seal or part of the SAS. At times, I wish I had that level of commitment to a single mission and that I was 'doubt proof'. I doubt myself and weigh up my decisions all the time. However, all this analysing and reflecting is part of what makes me a great coach.

Most of all, what gets me through tough times is managing my emotions. Despite my emotions towards an issue, I'll work to an objective plan. I will stick to the plan unless its purpose is no longer needed.

Emotions cloud judgement. Just because something is hard doesn't mean you should quit. Conversely, just because you're excited doesn't mean it will work.

I have learned that consistency is king. Emotions come, if you want to master your business you must master your emotions.

The other question I often ask myself on struggling to complete a difficult task is; 'Can I live without completing this task or objective?'.

If the answer is yes, I'll let it go. If not, I double down and make it happen.

In your opinion, what are the tangible benefits for entrepreneurs to staying fit and healthy?

Taking care of yourself is important so you can keep up with the challenge of working at an elite level. If you are fit and healthy you have the following advantages:

1. *Clarity of mind and thought* — Part of staying fit and healthy is eating right. Food affects neurotransmitters, which are chemical messages that make us feel either motivated or sleepy. Obviously, any high level entrepreneur will want to maximise their day by optimising neurotransmitters. One of the easiest and most effective ways to do this is through nutrition and exercise. Many entrepreneurs survive on caffeine and sugar. In my opinion, this lowers productivity and impairs effective decision making. The best work is done in a centred state, with a sustained slow release of energy, not a quick burst followed by a crash.
2. *Ability to work harder than your competition* — Like a sporting event, business is a competition. Some have raw talent, others have to work hard and pay attention to all the details. I believe it's when you combine the two you get greatness. Taking care of your health gives the ability to work hard and take less breaks. The average work week is Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. If you can wake up earlier, go to bed later and still be productive and feel great, you will out work your competitors and be at the top of your game.
3. *Leverage of appearance* — The truth is all humans make initial judgements based on appearance. The saying; 'how you do one thing is how you do everything' holds weight. Your fitness is something you have control over and getting in front of customers is easier when you're comfortable in your own skin. Take home; get your reflection in order before you take on the world. 'Look better', and do it for you. You will feel better and perform better.
4. *Self-mastery* — Self-mastery is a great skill for any entrepreneur to cultivate. Maintaining health and fitness is a practice in self-mastery. To do so, you need to exercise a level of self-discipline, choose foods wisely, develop an exercise routine and schedule time to make it happen (even when it's inconvenient). Maintaining a level of fitness and health is indicative of mastery over one's domain. If the person you were doing business with was easily swayed by flashy lights and shiny objects; would you still want to do business with them? Probably not. I would encourage any entrepreneur to practice self-mastery. It keeps your mind on point

and your focus sharp. In business negotiations, people may try and sway you one way or another. Self-mastery prevents you from being caught up in the shiny lights, flashy objects and empty promises.

What are your top six tips for entrepreneurs to create more energy and mental clarity?

I have done a lot of research into how nutrition affects energy levels, performance and productivity. These are some tips I share with people:

1. *Eat moderately* — Eating too much makes us fat, lazy and sluggish. It's the antithesis of success, and not what we want as entrepreneurs. To seize the day, we need to be sharp, concise and ready for action. This means eating a balanced amount — not too much and not too little.
2. *Eat more complete proteins* — Protein is needed for our immune system, satiation and the optimal regulation of neurotransmitters. Dopamine, a critical neurotransmitter that affects our drive and ambition, is up regulated with complete proteins (found in animal sources) and down regulated with a high carb diet. People ask me if they can get the same benefits from non-animal sources, but these always fall short as they are incomplete proteins.
Side note: I encourage everyone to make conscious efforts to support sustainable organic farming, and purchase quality, organic meats from a local farmer.
3. *Pay attention to foods that affect neurotransmitters* — A high carbohydrate diet will raise serotonin and make you sleepy and sluggish. It does nothing for optimising neurotransmitters. Eating foods that spike blood sugar are not good for steady energy levels and sustained productivity. On the other hand, quality proteins will raise dopamine and increase your drive. Put effort into your diet as it's quite literally the fuel tank to your performance vehicle and brain.

4. *Develop a routine and stick to it* — Some things are best served by having a routine. Once you've made a decision to eat healthy or eat at certain times, you don't have to remake that decision. It's done. You don't have to rely on mood or motivation, it's just what you do. Making decisions costs us time and emotional energy. This is why successful people like Mark Zuckerberg, Warren Buffett or the late Steve Jobs are/were known for wearing the same clothes or eating the same foods each day. Save your decision making for issues that matter.
5. *Control your blood sugar and you will have control over your energy levels* — There's about a teaspoon of blood glucose circulating around your bloodstream at this very moment. What does this mean? If you're relying on energy drinks, coffee or sugar to make it through the day, you're taking a reactive approach to your energy levels rather than a proactive one. This is like quitting your job, taking out a loan, and living off the loan. Eventually you will need to pay it back — with interest! The solution is to control your blood sugar with moderate, planned meals. I discourage snacking because it raises your blood sugar sporadically. Instead, I advocate eating moderate meals to stabilise your blood sugar and increase your long-term energy.
6. *Drink cacao (raw chocolate)* — Raw cacao (with no added sugar or milk) is a superfood. Cacao contains phenylethylamine, a neuromodulating component that settles brain chemistry and regulates cravings and mood. While it's not a magic drug, it's my personal go to for relaxing my brain and keeping me focused with no jitters.

What rituals do you personally do to stay fit and healthy so you can be the best version of yourself?

My rituals are pretty simple.

I wake up at 6:30am every morning, get some work done then hit the gym at 9am before anyone can take a piece of me. In the financial

world, it's common practice to pay yourself first. I apply the same thinking when it comes to my energy, health and fitness.

My training is tough and requires focus. This is the first thing I do when I arrive to work as training is the reason I got into the personal training business to begin with.

Even though I'm the business owner and the majority of my time is spent ensuring its growth, I'll always be a hardcore gym nut at heart. Sticking to my ritual helps keep me focused on our core business: training and empowering other people to improve their lives.

What are the most important things you have learnt about succeeding in business?

There are three key lessons which I am constantly reminded of:

1. *It's not fair* — There will be times when you think 'it's not fair'. But life's not fair. Akin to playing poker, the dealer's only concern is that everyone starts with the same number of cards. What you do next is no one's concern but your own. If you want to be the boss, the visionary, the leader, the one taking the risk, you have to get used to the fact that people will judge and scrutinise you. Some may even be watching you, waiting for you to fail so that they can celebrate your downfall. The obstacles and challenges life shoves in your way won't feel fair, but each one prepares you for the next chapter in life and business.
2. *Persistence is everything* — You will fail. There will be challenges. If you're not prepared to go through the rings of fire when you're getting started, forget about it when you are successful. The rings of fire will only get harder to jump through and the flames even scarier. You must learn to persist under pressure.
3. *People won't understand or care* — As the business owner, you will want everyone to care as much as you do. Staff, prospects,

family, friends ... they won't. They won't care about the details. They won't understand how hard it was for you. Let go of needing your challenges to be understood and embrace that people will think it was easy for you. Part of this is also understanding the Dunning-Kruger Effect. You need to be fairly good at something to really understand how extraordinary someone else is. Let go of needing to validate you or your business. Don't chase success, work towards your ideal and let go of the cheer squad.

If someone reading this was starting from scratch, what would you recommend they do first?

If you're new to this game, you need to embrace failure.

It will teach you more about succeeding than almost anything else. Success and failure are two sides of the same coin. Knowing this will allow you to play the game of business more effectively.

Failing early will take the pressure off having to get it right and put your ego in check. It will also show you how much work you will have to do to make something succeed.

I've had years in business where almost everything I touched went right. I've also had years where almost everything I touched went wrong. I gain much more wisdom when it goes wrong than right because it gives me insight into how to grow my business to reach new levels.

What do you say to people who think it is too late to get into business and fear they've 'missed the boat'?

With an attitude like that, they probably have. They will probably continue to miss the boat unless they act.

Business is not a spectator sport. Personally, I would rather take the shot and miss than never take the shot. And yes, when you take the shot and miss, people will blame you for missing. You need to learn to live with that. For me, it's gratifying knowing that I failed on my terms.

Business is not about age, race, colour, or gender. It's about giving the marketplace what it wants. It's about being of value. I would encourage people who think they've missed the boat to be clear on what value they want to bring to the marketplace or industry.

Free BONUS GIFT

Mark Ottobre has kindly offered a FREE BONUS GIFT valued at \$47.00 to all readers of this book.

17 Nutritional Principles to Create Long Lasting Results — Having trained hundreds of prize-winning body shapers, Mark Ottobre is one of Australia's leading fitness coaches. At the top of this game, Mark is motivated to give back to anyone who wants to lose fat and create the body of their dreams. Download this video and audio and follow the steps — you'll be amazed at your personal transformation.

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EXCITED FOR GROWTH



MICHELLE YOUNG

“ We become so conditioned to thinking small or that this is good enough. We often stay in our comfort zones and play it safe. It is only the top business owners who know there are no limits to what can be achieved. ”

Michelle Young

MICHELLE YOUNG

Born and raised on the Gold Coast, Michelle was taught at a very young age to think differently and maintain a natural curiosity about everything in life.

Despite being a gifted student, Michelle never heeded the call to study at university. Instead, the first seven years of her working life were spent in retail, banking and administration, building the foundation for future success.

In 2006, Michelle started her own wholesale cosmetic company. The Cosmetic Department offered an online wholesale market where pharmacies and retailers could purchase brand name cosmetics at discounted prices. This business quickly got the attention and subsequent objections from a major worldwide brand.

Michelle didn't let negative attention stop her and instead started to invest in her business education. She enrolled at the National College of Business, where her coaches encouraged her to think outside the square.

In October 2014, Michelle founded POP UP Cosmetics. This retail model is the culmination of 12 years of experience in the beauty industry across wholesaling, manufacturing, beauty awards, expos and conferences.

The POP UP model is now thriving, selling brand name cosmetics and international brands at heavily discounted prices. The leasing aspect is particularly appealing to shopping centres and real estate agents as it helps them fill empty shops and secure long term tenants.

Michelle is a huge advocate for learning and development. She has attended Business Mastery with Tony Robbins as well as programs with many other top business leaders.

Michelle has appeared on Channel 7's *Sunrise* and in *The Australian Financial Review*. This driven entrepreneur was identified as one of the 16 Women to Watch by Business Chicks in 2016.

Now based in Sydney, Michelle is currently expanding POP UP Cosmetics around Australia.

When did your family first discover you had entrepreneurial talent?

My interest in business and my ability to observe upcoming trends started when I was 16. Prior to the juice bar phenomenon, I had taken a trip to Byron Bay, where I noticed a small juice bar in the main street. After the trip, I went to my father and told him I wanted to open a similar business. He gave me some advice and suggested I speak to my local Woolworths and Coles. The idea was to ask for their fruit and vegetables that were not fit for sale and set up a temporary kiosk near the supermarket to trade off their foot traffic.

I didn't do a single thing to progress that dream! I thought, I am too young, too inexperienced and I should be concentrating on what I am going to study at university to please my mother.

Three years later, Janine Allis, who I admire greatly, opened the first Boost Juice Bar in Adelaide. She has since created a multi-national franchise.

Four years after that, I started my first business called Precious Memories. Having noticed the trend that photos were beginning to move to the digital space, I decided I would do a flyer drop offering a service where I would scan and store family snapshots into a digital format for safekeeping. The intention was to visit people's homes, charge a fee and provide them with a CD of their scanned pictures. After the flyer drop I received just one phone call. I didn't have a clue how to handle a prospective customer, we didn't learn this in school. Once again, I didn't back myself and I let the dream of running my own business slip away.

Third time lucky, I saw movements in the fragrance market, where a company had started selling brand name fragrance well under the normal selling prices or recommended retail prices (RRP). That

“ I love waking up each morning and being creatively inspired ... ”

really piqued my curiosity and I was so intrigued as to how they were doing this. I couldn't figure it out.

Just at the right time, I was on my very first trip to the United States. I had run out of the \$55 mascara that I usually bought in Australia and so

I stopped into the local department store in Los Angeles. To my shock and disbelief, the exact same mascara was \$25USD. I was speechless! Even with the exchange rate at the time, it still only converted to \$32AUD. I couldn't stop thinking, 'How can this be?' This experience laid the foundation for my future as a business owner.

What do you love most about running POP UP Cosmetics?

For me, business is about a creative outlet and being strategic. I love waking up each morning and being creatively inspired, knowing that we can introduce any element to the business to make it a better experience for our customers and create growth for the company. My mind is easily stimulated and I am never short of ideas. It is the lack of time to implement the ideas that frustrates me the most!

Each day, myself and the team at head office work on strategy and growth. We have a constant focus on our customer experience and on delivering quality cosmetics at prices that are affordable to everyone. To keep the business on track to achieve our goals, I have five major projects that I give particular focus to each quarter.

Another aspect of business I am really excited about is our soon to be launched giving arm called POP UP Moments. This initiative will be able to help many causes and hopefully make a difference to many peoples lives.

At what point did you realise that you have a serious business?

I knew I was running a good venture when I could take a breath!

When the time came that I was not physically doing anything in the business in terms of physically being in the stores but I was still making good money, I started to feel like a serious business owner.

This meant I had set up the right structure, with enough systems and the right people in place for us to produce income and for me to not physically be there.

POP UP Cosmetics runs on an iPad and iPhone app for the point of sale and stock management systems. This enables me to log into any pop up sale and see the live daily revenue, customer count, products sold, average sale and peaks and troughs throughout the day. I remember leading into one Christmas, we had three company owned stores operating and I was working from a cafe, refreshing the iPhone app and getting the live data from each location. It was at that point I felt like it had all been worth it.

How have you been able to source the products you sell for your business?

The products that we sell at the POP UP Cosmetic sales are all purchased from our wholesaling company. The wholesaling arm has been sourcing and importing brand name cosmetics for over 12 years.

We have spent many years building relationships within supply chains. It has been very hard work, but what we do is unique and it's also pretty fun to be able to stop via New York after visiting US or UK suppliers.

What have you learnt when it comes to negotiating with suppliers?

It pays to ask. Just like any business, suppliers need to move stock. If they have overdue accounts to pay, the right offer at the right time can sometimes pay off. However, I have learnt that you also need to be very careful how you approach this. I'm pretty up front, so I just nominate the price that I am prepared to pay and offer to take the balance of their stock in that particular line or a significant amount. Quite often, they are happy to move it to make room for new stock. Everyone knows what their lowest price is, so I don't push beyond the initial request.

As your business evolved, you've become an expert in retailing. What advice would you share with aspiring retailers?

1. *Create good first impressions* — We have about three to five seconds to get a customer's attention and make them want to enter our store. Everyone is busy and so many stores promote a 'sale' environment. Customers can become immune to sale signage. As a retailer, our pop ups offer genuine sale prices, which customers do respond to. Once the customer enters the store, we have certain standards that the staff and sale uphold to ensure they have the best possible experience. When I enter a store, my eyes are scanning the sale and set up, looking through a customer's eyes.
2. *Keeping things interesting* — I find it so boring to walk past a retailer offering the same products 365 days a year. What is the reason to keep buying? Where is the impulse? Over 20 per cent of customers who attend our sales are repeat customers, so we need to keep things interesting for them by offering new products. We even have some customers who follow us around and visit nearly every single sale, so if we don't have something new each week, I feel like I am letting those regulars down.

3. *Pricing structure* — In retail there are all types of customers. Some are looking for a bargain, some love the thrill of the high ticket items. It is important to have products and assortment for both pricing types. A branding expert explained to me that the designer handbag on display in the glass box in the luxury store isn't there to be sold. It is there to make the bags at half that price seem more reasonable. After hearing that, I could see how this happens in my pop up stores. We have products that retail for \$2 and \$20. This makes the \$2 products look even cheaper to that customer and yet the \$20 customer is still getting a price lower than anywhere else.
4. *Use leading technology solutions* — We have a simple to use, yet highly accurate mobile app which runs all POP UP Cosmetic sales and helps us run the business. Being able to get the real time data of every sale, on any device, no matter where you are is invaluable. I spoke with over fifteen point of sale providers, and tested many platforms before choosing the one we now use today. It might seem excessive, but I knew that data and the scalability of the platform would place us in a good position for national growth. We can now very easily track sales, stock levels, bestsellers, profit reports, customer counts, sale performance and staff actions.
5. *Team culture* — The team dynamics are very important. You can spend years building a great team culture and with just the introduction of one toxic person, the whole team can drop in their enthusiasm. POP UP Cosmetics strives to promote a culture of positivity, friendliness and integrity. As the founder and CEO, I do my best every day to set the example.
6. *Call to action!* — People have unlimited buying options now available in stores and offline. I am always trying to create the desire and urgency to buy. We offer quality products that help women look and feel great at unbeatable prices. My goal is for our customers to buy today, take everything home and love their shopping haul.

How important do you think location is when it comes to running a physical store?

The placement of our POP UP Cosmetics sales attributes to up to 60 per cent of our sales success. We know how to drive traffic to the sales, but a good location is an excellent starting point for any physical store or business. I find it very difficult to comprehend that a business would set up a physical store or business without testing the location. But I see business after business set up shop, sign a long lease, pour money into an expensive fit out and then cross their fingers and hope for the best and for customers to arrive. Too often, and this breaks my heart, they close down a year later.

The data is out there. There are consultants who can tell you which side of the street more dollars are spent on, in every street in Australia. This is how well established national franchises choose their location. They know exactly where to place a store or business to capitalise on the customer catchment and not sabotage the next closest franchise or business in the group.

What strategies do you use to drive traffic to your store?

I have attended so many business and marketing workshops, weekends and events. If you have a retail or any kind of business for that matter, it will pay to educate yourself on how to drive traffic your way.

We market with tried and tested methods, repeating what works and dropping what doesn't. I think it is really important to give multiple strategies a try and measure the results.

At POP UP Cosmetics, we track exactly where every customer comes from, so we know the return of each dollar spent. We have captured this data from day one, even working on paper until we found the right digital platforms. We have tried flyer drops, newspapers, social media, joint ventures and email databases.

When I was starting out, I did all the advertising and marketing, however, I now utilise experts in online digital marketing and social media who use highly targeted and specific strategies to help bring customers into store. Once you can afford to, it is best to hire trusted experts, so that you can again refocus on further growth strategies.

Through our systems, our social media campaigns and email databases, we are able to grow our customer base by five to ten per cent every week. This brings more and more local customers in-store each time our sale returns.



Michelle, ready to start another successful POP UP

With so many businesses moving online, why have you decided against this strategy?

I actually started online with an eBay store 12 years ago. I love the leverage that the online space provides and I built up my eBay store until the income matched my 'paid' job at a university.

The eBay store then evolved into a wholesale company called The Cosmetic Department. We wholesale to pharmacies and other retail stores around Australia and internationally.

The POP UP Cosmetics concept actually came about through a cash flow emergency crisis four years ago. It was a scary time and one that I will never forget. I was convinced by a smooth talking salesman to order in a whole heap of cosmetic stock on consignment. I was promised the world and was delivered nothing. It was a total failure and I was left owing one of my suppliers \$27,000. I didn't have the money and payment was due in ten days.

I had a small storage space and office in Rosebery, NSW and I had seen a lot of the surrounding clothing warehouses having the occasional warehouse and sample sale. I always noticed their advertising and attended their sales when I could. This got me thinking that maybe I could have a sale and quickly get rid of this stock to try and generate some of the funds to pay my supplier.

The very first POP UP Cosmetics sale was held in October 2014. It was so attractive because we were clearing the stock at cost price, just so I could pay my supplier. While I only made a few thousand dollars, it started what is now today a very solid business model. I am so thankful to that smooth talking salesman, as without him, we would not have started POP UP Cosmetics.

**What would you say to people who claim retail is dead?
And, why are you now looking at expanding your business
nationally?**

In some industries, I do feel that retail is dead or is starting to slip into a slow death. But that is because there is nothing exciting happening. If you visit a shopping centre, there are stores that all of the customers are in and stores that are empty. I look at this everywhere I go and can quickly see why. It's getting boring for people. There is no experience for them so they shop online from the luxury of their mobile phone.

Fortunately, cosmetics continues to be a well performing retail category. Walk past any Mecca or Sephora and that is where the women are.

I also think customers are getting more savvy and are more educated on what is value for money. The internet makes everything so transparent. This is great for the consumer, but it also benefits retailers and businesses who have high levels of integrity and know what their customers want.

There are still many people who want to touch and feel before they buy. Currently 65 per cent of Australians shop online, but they still need to go to the shops. When they are there, as a retailer you have to do something to get them to visit your store.

The current opportunities in retail are huge and that is one of the reasons that we have decided to expand the POP UP Cosmetics model nationally. After three years of testing, prototyping and running our stores, we have the systems and strategy right. Our customers love our sales and we want to get further scale with our proven model. We want to share our 12 years of experience in the beauty industry, advanced technology and supplier relationships Australia wide.

What do you think are the essential qualities or attributes of successful entrepreneurs?

I believe there is a formula for success and there are four essential qualities a person should work on in order to become successful:

1. *Vision* — You need a compelling vision, along with enough emotion and intensity behind it to take action. This will help drive you along the journey. A clear vision of where you want your business to be in one, two or five years time can help you through the toughest times and adversities. We all have dreams throughout

our day, which is great, but successful business owners spend time in deliberate vision creation. This involves mapping out what you want for your business and your life in a way you can build on.

2. *Mindset* — Your mindset should be focused to always find a way. Sometimes circumstances are out of your control but the difference between success and failure in business is that the successful business owner always makes things happen. If the particular pathway that you thought would lead to your goal or your outcome does not pan out, it is imperative to adjust course. Remember, you are responsible for your own success.
3. *Constant learning* — Business and industries are always evolving and changing. In order to keep up with market changes, upcoming trends, disruptors and advances in technology, a successful business owner will also be evolving and growing too.
4. *Seeing potential* — I feel that one of the greatest gifts you can give to another person is to see them bigger than they see themselves, without the limits that they impose on themselves. This includes yourself. We become so conditioned to thinking small or that this is good enough. We often stay in our comfort zones and play it safe. It is only the top business owners who know there are no limits to what can be achieved. In addition to seeing the potential in others, the ability to see the potential of an opportunity keeps your mindset open and positive.

You're a big believer of coaching or in having a mentor. What are the five biggest lessons you have learned from your coach or mentors?

There have been some years where I have wiped out my company bank account just to pay for certain coaching and training. I have always got this back tenfold. Good coaches offer great, practical advice and new strategies to bring into the business. It is never a cost, it is an investment.

In the early days, I used to think mentors and business coaching were for people who couldn't get motivated. I was never guilty of that so I never really entertained the idea.

I then had the opportunity to attend Tony Robbins' Business Mastery course in Florida. This is the program where he offers his 'Million Dollar Guarantee'. He is so confident that he can deliver the results to his audience that he offers people a full refund if they don't feel they can add one million dollars of revenue to their business after the first day with the information and exercises he gives.

The advantage of studying with Tony Robbins is that he trains your brain into the right psychology to perform at your peak in business.

In addition to attending many workshops and week long programs, I have also invested in a one-on-one business coach. We have a weekly session via Skype where I am accountable for what we discussed in the prior session. Without her guidance and push, my days would be filled with being reactive to my environment and I would get pulled in every direction and get nothing of importance done.

My coach is able to direct my attention to what is most important to advance the business each week. I have had sessions where that very next week I have added \$20,000 to the business just from her giving me a nudge and challenging my thoughts.

If you had your time over again, what are some of the things that you would do differently?

If I could start at the beginning, there are some things I would do differently. While I don't have any regrets, I do feel that if I had changed some of these things, I would have progressed faster and reduced some of the workload,

“ Good coaches offer great, practical advice and new strategies to bring into the business. ”

stress and the handbrake that I had on the business in the early days. Some of these are:

- Invest in an assistant as soon as you can afford to pay someone. An assistant will remove you from the unnecessary tasks that take up your time so you can concentrate on sales and growing the business. I didn't hire a PA or Virtual Assistant for the first nine years that I was in business. This meant nine years of admin that just wasn't necessary and nine years of trying to do too much on my own. In the last three years, which is the same timeframe that I have had an assistant, my business has experienced the strongest growth period.
- Building systems for all tasks you will do more than once. By doing this, it is easy to replicate success, scale and hire staff. Although it takes longer to create a system for a particular task or process initially, the time this will save you in the long run as you build your team is invaluable and won't slow your growth. My business has systems and checklists for everything.
- Be discerning with who you get involved with in business, be it a potential business partner, supplier or client. It is important to know that the outcome they are seeking is the same outcome or mutually beneficial to your outcome.

What are your top tips to become a great entrepreneur?

Working hard — People often look at the success of POP UP Cosmetics and say things like, “You really stumbled across something great” or, “You're so lucky”. In fact, my success was ten years in the making. I didn't earn any money in the first few years and I would cancel social engagements because I only had \$20 left after I had paid the weekly overheads. While I am not proud to say that I regularly put in 110 hour weeks, it has paid off. The vision drove my decisions and therefore I needed to make these kinds of sacrifices in friendships

and relationships. Now I am able to step away a bit and enjoy the success, well at least have a bit more of a social life!

Scale — Get it right and then scale it. If what you are doing is working, think of ways to multiply the results. Think of ways that you can duplicate yourself if you offer a service. Or think of ways you can expand and multiply if you have a products-based business.

Data — Know your data and numbers. A great entrepreneur knows that this is one of the fundamentals in business success as passion and ambition will only take you so far. Particular attention needs to be paid to the number of customers, leads, average spends, where your customers are coming from, cost to acquire each customer, margins and of course profit. If you are not mathematically minded, seeking the help of an advisor is a great step. Remember turnover, profit and cash flow are all vital to the pulse of the business.

Team — You can only make it so far on your own. In order to gain leverage, to scale and to grow, you will need a great team around you. A successful entrepreneur will hire people more capable than themselves for particular roles and then take a helicopter view above the organisation to observe and implement strategies to further the business towards the company's goals.

Systems — A great entrepreneur will invest in systems. Having these in place allows the business owner to focus on the vision, growth and income producing activities. The staff will then have all the resources they need to deliver consistent results every time and uphold the brand's image.

Free BONUS GIFT

Michelle Young has kindly offered a FREE BONUS GIFT valued at \$24.95 to all readers of this book.

10 Things That You Need To Look For When Starting Or Buying A Beauty Business — Michelle has completed extensive business training with Tony Robbins, Business Blueprint and The National College of Business and has studied many different business models. She has spoken to both business owners and serial entrepreneurs and put together a FREE report and checklist that details what you need to look out for if you are thinking of buying or starting any type of beauty business.

Simply visit the web page below and follow the directions to download:

www.SecretsExposed.com.au/successful-entrepreneurs

PRODUCTIVE FREEDOM



PETER MORIARTY

“ To me, entrepreneurship is about problem solving and that’s what I’ve always really enjoyed. You could say it is my superpower. ”

Peter Moriarty

PETER MORIARTY

A leading expert in small business cloud computing, Peter Moriarty was ranked as one of Australia's Top 10 Entrepreneurs Under 30 four times by SmartCompany and Australian Anthill publications.

As founder of itGenius, Peter's advice on business cloud technology has been featured in publications including the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *Australian Financial Review* and *Sky News Business*.

Growing up in rural NSW, Peter started IT consulting at the age of 15, distributing flyers with the help of his trusty pushbike. Since then, he has maintained his passion for technology, growing itGenius into a full-service IT consultancy which serves thousands of businesses across Australia.

Today, itGenius is the leading Small Business Google Cloud partner in Australia. Together with his team, Peter helps businesses implement simple technology which allows them to work anywhere, at anytime, on any device.

itGenius has worked with some of Australia's most well-known brands and organisations, including the NSW Government, Fairfax Group and Canva. The team's biggest achievement is helping thousands of primarily small to medium sized businesses to collaborate more effectively with Google's suite of business productivity tools.

When it comes to technology, Peter's philosophy is to 'Keep it Simple'. He lives by the Einstein quote, 'Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent - but it takes a touch of genius - and a lot of courage - to move in the opposite direction'.

Personally, Peter is on a crusade to realise his dream of helping as many people as he can to embrace technology as a tool to improve their lives. When not working, he's either travelling, 4WDing, cycling or riding a motorbike somewhere where there's sunshine!

When did you first discover you had entrepreneurial talent?

Without sounding too boastful, I do feel as though I was born with an entrepreneurial gift.

When I was six years old, my brother and I used to take walks around the suburb where we lived. One day we stumbled across somebody's beautiful feature letterbox. They had some nice stones in a little stone garden around the letterbox. We worked out if we took those stones and smashed them up on the pavement, they had little quartz crystals on the inside.

My brother and I took our little trolley up there, stole a bunch of those nice stones and smashed them all up on the pavement. Then we set up a stall on the side of the road.

We had a table, a couple of chairs and our precious stolen stones. We flagged passing cars down and sold the crystals for 50 to 75 cents each.

That was my first experience of business. From there, I graduated to running a disco in my house with my brothers and sisters. At high school I sold bootleg CDs and had a number of other businesses. When I turned 15, I decided to move into a more legitimate venture, which was technology.

To me, entrepreneurship is about problem solving and that's what I've always really enjoyed. You could say it is my superpower.

One of my talents is to look at problems and find ways to solve them with a commercial result. I believe that business is about problem solving and that's what I really get a kick out of.

“ To earn proper money, I had to complete chores. ”

Who was your biggest business mentor and what important lessons did you learn from them?

My number one business mentor is my father. When I first started my business as a teenager, he taught me the basics. He has been a business owner for over 25 years and he showed me how to answer the phone, how to speak to a client and how to provide good customer service. He showed me the ins and outs of invoicing, how to create a proposal and how to set up agreements, all of which helped me get started as an ambitious teenager.

Before that, probably the most important lesson I learned from my dad was the value of hard work.

I remember one school holiday when my dad, my brothers and I moved house. My dad's a builder and is a bit of a hoarder, so he had building supplies strewn all around his property.

It was an extended holiday and it took us the full four weeks to move from one house to the other. This involved us waking up when it was still dark, having breakfast as the sun came up, working for the whole day then having dinner as the sun set. We'd spend the day loading trucks, unloading trucks, packing sheds, unpacking sheds and moving things like doors, bits of timber, and corrugated iron.

Dad paid us for our troubles and I came to understand the monetary value of hard work. I also learned the value of grit and responsibility and putting the effort into something, even though I didn't necessarily feel it was the most exciting way to spend my holiday. It was worth it for the reward at the end.

This lesson showed me there is a commercial reality to life. When I wanted a mobile phone when I was at school, I knew it was something

I had to work for. To earn proper money, I had to complete chores. I also had my little businesses on the side.

No matter what I have wanted in life, I've had to work for it. That has really been a guiding principle for me.

When did you first discover your passion for IT?

I started my education in a Steiner school, which doesn't focus on technology. Funnily enough, I was raised with minimal television and without computers or gadgets, like Playstation or Xbox.

It wasn't until my parents divorced when I was eight years old that I was regularly exposed to my first computer and able to spend time discovering what it had to offer.

When I was 11 years old, I was fascinated with problem solving and technology. I was lucky that my dad brought home a couple of computers he had found discarded as rubbish on the side of the road. He told my brothers and I that if we could learn how to fix them and get them working we could play games on them.

We went to the library and borrowed a book on how to build and fix our own computers. After a lot of reading and research, we finally got those computers working.

I was hooked from there. I loved the aspect of problem solving and had a fascination with technology in general.

What were some of the early challenges you faced after setting up itGenius?

As a new business owner, I struggled to get credit. In the beginning we were funded on credit cards and cash flow. To this day, we have

never taken on massive banks loans because we haven't been able to qualify.

In fact, I once walked into the bank at age 21 and asked them to lend me \$100,000, with no property to back me up and a business turnover of only \$60,000. The banks laughed at me and shook their heads back then and that has pretty much been my experience every time I have tried to raise business capital from banks.

Even once we had hit the magical \$1 million mark in revenue, it was still difficult to raise any kind of bank financing as the business was growing fast and not making big profits. We've since relied on alternative private funding models to fund our growth.

What did you do to find your initial customers and begin to make a profit?

I started my business when I was 15 years old. At that time, I lived on a rural property with the closest neighbours several kilometers away.

I decided I wanted to find some clients in the local community so I popped my laptop in my backpack and jumped on my pushbike with some printed flyers. It took me a whole day to ride up and down our street to distribute my flyer. I offered things like removing viruses, helping people convert their old vinyl LPs to CD, and tuning up computers with extra RAM or larger hard drives.

Once I had my first car, I would finish school for the day, change into a business shirt and drive to my clients' houses. I found I could see two or three clients per evening and I could fit in a full day's work on both Saturday and Sunday each week. This got me through high school without having to find a job anywhere else. I was able to afford to buy a nicer second car as well as save some money for a property, which I purchased before I turned 21.

In my final year of high school, I made \$30,000 worth of sales. A funny story is that towards the end of Year 12, while I had been mostly well-behaved, I landed a suspension for not paying attention and mucking around. The school dean sent me home and instead of being ashamed or upset about that, I was quite excited because I had clients to see and it meant I had three solid days to get out there and earn some money.

Being a consulting business primarily charging by the hour at the time, we were breaking even from day one (remember I was living at home at the time), but our ambition was always to build a scaled business servicing customers country-wide and internationally to have the biggest impact.

How does your IT company differ to others in the market?

Most IT companies are about control. So many IT professionals believe they are the smartest person in the room and, therefore, should have the most control.

We go in the opposite direction by aiming to be the Uber of IT. We want to upset that model of the IT guy forever having control because we believe smart and savvy business owners should be the ones making the technology decisions for themselves that will drive business growth.

Not every business owner needs to know how to remove a virus, tune up a computer or change the MX records in their DNS settings. What we believe is that business owners should know enough to make technology decisions in their business. Hence most of our business is spent educating business owners on how to make the right choices when it comes to technology.

We believe in operating a lean business and delivering the essentials at a price that people are happy to pay. We try to leave the ultimate

control in the hands of the business owner, liberating them to run their business and feel in control so that IT is no longer a scary black box sitting in the corner and can instead be seen as a tool for growth.

What's one of the best business deals you've ever done and why did it work so well?

One of the best deals my business has done was being able to acquire a competitor who went into liquidation. This deal was completed within a 48 hour window, from start to finish. We not only retained the business, but 95 per cent of the clientele and 100 per cent of the intellectual property.

The kicker is we had offered to buy this business only a month prior for quite a significant sum. The final price we ended up paying was roughly \$0.15 on the dollar of what had been offered just a month before.

Here's how we pulled off this particular agreement:

For starters, we had done smaller deals in the past and used them for training. There were lots of business transactions which, when talking with my lawyers and advisors, were barely worth the bother. However, I've always believed in growth through acquisition and growth through bringing like-minded businesses together rather than doing business slowly and acquiring customers one by one.

With each of these smaller deals I completed, I knew we were preparing ourselves to be able to execute larger and more complex deals.

The second thing which made a difference to this deal is grit.

With this particular opportunity we had to negotiate with three different parties. Firstly with the liquidator who held the ownership of the assets of the business. We also had to negotiate with the

previous owner of the business who owned the brand in a separate entity (we negotiated for them to sell us that business for a dollar).

Finally, we negotiated with a former employee of the business that had gone into liquidation who had a strong relationship with a number of the customers. If she wasn't onboard to work with us, we weren't going to be able to retain the client base.

Managing to execute three different business transactions within a 48 hour window was a huge challenge but also quite an achievement.

You are a big believer in outsourcing and having staff overseas, what can you tell us about this practice?

Outsourcing makes sense for anyone who has staff working in their business.

Right now, the Philippines is very popular for outsourcing because of their great education system, Americanised culture and excellent standards of customer service.

Sites like Freelancer.com and Upwork.com will allow you to connect your business with workers in countries all over the globe to get started working for you. The services available could be just about anything you can imagine.

We've often been asked if sending jobs overseas is taking work away from Australian businesses and Australian staff. My belief is that us building a more successful business will allow us to better contribute to the economy in our own country as well as helping to support staff in developing nations that might not otherwise have the same opportunities or prosperity.

“ The services available could be just about anything you can imagine. ”

Overall, I believe the globalisation of our workforce is positive for our economy and humanity in general.

How do you manage your overseas staff and what tools do you use to do this?

The key for managing a geographically distributed team is first of all, strong management frameworks and strong corporate oversight of the way you run your business.

Secondly, you must have extremely strong people management and HR functions. That includes coaching, training, and especially physically connecting your team through social events. There's a lot of trust required with having team members work at home or having team members work somewhere where you may not be able to easily sit down face-to-face on a regular basis. That means that you will have to overwork on your one-on-ones, personal catch ups, personality profiling and performance management.

Effective file sharing and collaboration tools like G Suite will help you achieve this. Video conferencing will keep you connected with daily huddles and weekly all-hands meetings, while minute to minute communication can be handled by instant message. This replicates the interoffice chat you would usually see where everyone is sitting alongside each other.

Do you believe the days of having a physical presence in an office are gone?

I believe the set in stone requirement of having a physical office is now gone. However, it's a personal choice whether or not businesses decide to completely forego having an office in a physical location.

Video conferencing, online collaboration and cloud-based communication tools now make it easy enough to collaborate with your team

remotely. You can manage your staff, communicate and connect with your customers as well as get productive work done from any location, on any device.

People may ask if it is worth having an office, but I believe it still has its advantages. For example, it is easier to create business culture and avoid the isolation of working from home by yourself if you have a place to come to regularly. There are also ample opportunities for spontaneous collaboration and interoffice chatter, which is impossible to completely replicate with online tools. Switching to a model without a physical office or presence is one not for the fainthearted, but it is definitely possible and many have succeeded in this area.

Personally, at itGenius, we have a hybrid set up where we have some fixed offices as well as many of our team working at home. For the elements of the office that international staff miss out on like social get-togethers, we ensure that we replicate these in a virtual way. We hold a fortnightly ‘Thank God it’s Thursday’ meeting where we jump on a group video call and shoot the breeze about non-work related stuff for a couple of hours.

Many of the team will bring along a beer or order a pizza, and we have a little party just like we would if we were heading out for drinks on a Friday afternoon.

What are your five to seven favorite technology tools that small business owners should know about and use?

G Suite / Google Cloud — Google’s online ecosystem is the number one platform for business owners wanting to work anywhere and build a geographically distributed team. Google’s tools truly allow you to connect your staff, clients, and contractors or suppliers, enabling them to work together in a collaborative fashion even when spread across different corners of the globe. G Suite is also a massive boost for productivity for you and your team as Google’s built-in Artificial

“ This way you can stay connected to your business no matter where you are. ”

Intelligence and Machine Learning can power-up your spreadsheets, help find that email you're searching for faster or automatically help you retrieve the document you need just at the right time.

Dialpad — This cloud-based business phone system frees you from your office as it works on your mobile and computers as an app as well as with a headset or deskphone on your computer. Gone are the days of long term telco contracts, unexpected bills and phone systems going down because something went wrong in the PBX box. Being able to receive a business call with no fuss when sitting in a hotel room in another country is pure magic and being able to call your customers from anywhere in the world and have them see your local office number calling on their phone means your calls will be answered. This way you can stay connected to your business no matter where you are.

LastPass — Safe and simple, LastPass randomly generates secure passwords and helps protect them. It also allows you to securely share and store your passwords with members of your team. I highly recommend this platform for enhancing your security as it solves the problem of coming up with and remembering a different password for every site that you use.

Zendesk / Help Scout — Those in service businesses who use a ticketing or customer communications system like Zendesk or Help Scout will always be able to see what is going on with delivering customer work. These help solve the problem of email overload for you and your team by allowing teams to collaborate on email inboxes.

Asana — Task management is critical for all businesses and rather than using whiteboards or pen and paper, we recommend a cloud-based communication and task management tool. Asana is simple to use, free for small teams to get started with, and available on both

the web and mobile apps. If you haven't started with a shared task list yet, we recommend starting with Asana or Teamwork.com.

Google Hangouts / Zoom Meetings / Slack — Communication is absolutely critical for keeping your team connected, especially when they are geographically distributed. We recommend Google Hangouts or Zoom Meetings for video conferencing and Google Hangouts chat or Slack for instant messaging and text communication.

Why are you such a big believer in the Cloud?

Business owners we work with are typically after more of one of these three things; time, freedom or money.

If it's time they want more of, well, maybe that means being able to take more holidays or spend less time in front of the computer.

If it's freedom, it might mean being able to work from home or pick up their kids from school, but still be productive when they're sitting in the car out the front of the waiting area.

If it's more profit that a business owner wants, we know that when the right elements are put in place, smart and modern cloud technology can reduce the costs of a business by up to 70 per cent.

Implementing modern, cloud-based business tools like G Suite, Dialpad and the other tools I've shared here are the underpinnings of achieving these business goals.

Cloud Technology is also the enabler for geographically distributed businesses, which means that with the right ecosystem and with the right tools, you're freed up from being tied to one location.

Not every business owner wants to be a vagabond, travelling the world and working from a backpack ... but what we do know is that

most would like a little bit more time, a few more holidays, more flexibility in how they work and less risk of a technological outage slowing their business down.

The cloud helps solve a lot of business problems as well as liberating business owners to be location independent when they want to be.

In terms of computers, do you recommend Mac or PC?

In the world of working in the cloud and many business applications now being purely web-based, I have moved to a position of being agnostic when it comes to hardware.

I worked originally with PCs then became a diehard Mac fan for about 15 years. I recently switched to using Google's Chrome operating system on Chromebooks and Chromeboxes.

Google's Chrome OS has some distinct advantages over Microsoft or Apple, like not being susceptible to any viruses and automatically updating for free every couple of weeks (instead of major updates rolling out every year or so from the bigger software vendors).

The reality is that businesses should use whatever platform is most comfortable for them and whichever their staff will be most productive on. Most cloud applications now run on the web so the only thing most companies need is a Chrome browser and a solid connection to the internet in order to be productive.

When should a business use G Suite and when should a business use Office 365?

There are two key ecosystems for businesses to rely on these days; Google's G Suite and Microsoft's Office 365.

I call these 'ecosystems' because the choice is broader than just which mail client you're using, Gmail or Outlook. Both ecosystems come with different integrations, additional tools, ways of working and device support, all of which may direct which is the right one for you. There are also particular industries with particular industry specific software which may lead you towards making a decision in a certain direction.

The reason my company chooses and recommends G Suite is because we see it as the Tesla of the IT industry.

Microsoft is a business running on multiple platforms and because its technology is non-web based, you need to install an app on your computer for it to work. That might be Outlook, Word or Excel.

Whether you're using a Mac or a PC, you need to install those apps locally. Microsoft needs to develop three or four different versions of those apps so they know they have one compatible with Macs, one for PCs, one compatible with the latest version of Windows as well as the two versions beforehand. Then they have to develop their mobile apps, going through the whole process again. They also have web versions of some of these apps bringing us to a total count of five or more platforms to develop for!

Google has the luxury of running everything in the web and purely in the cloud, which means they only have to develop one version of their product. As long as G Suite runs in the web browser, it runs everywhere.

Microsoft is like a gasoline car. It has an electronic fuel injection system with internal combustion, a transmission and different moving parts as well as all the other electronics and bits and pieces a car needs to run.

Think about Google like a Tesla. It has four wheels, a big battery and one or two electric motors. There aren't very many parts to service or moving parts that could fail. It's a very simple system.

“ To be an entrepreneur, you’ve got to be a bit nuts! ”

Google takes the philosophy of running everything online and live, which means everyone is always running the same version of their software and they never have to support out of date systems for years on end (like Microsoft does). This allows Google to quickly innovate on their products, release updates much faster, and ensure business data is kept safe. Google business tools are also focused on collaboration and are the true leaders in real-time sharing.

Can a business set up G Suite on their own or do they need to hire a professional such as yourself?

If I was to give you some timber, bricks, concrete, sand, nails, and a hammer, do you think you could put it all together into a house? I’m betting the answer is no and if you tried, I don’t think I’d want to be invited over for beers.

Like with all things technology, there are instruction manuals and you are welcome to have a crack at doing it yourself. However, like with all things in business, you have the choice to leverage either your time or your money.

If you have hours on end to implement a new piece of technology yourself and learn it from the ground up, then you can absolutely set up G Suite or something similar yourself. However, having implemented G Suite for over 1,000 businesses now, I can tell you that it is a much better use of your time to leave the technology setup to the experts.

Our service also includes professional training and hand-holding for you and your team to help manage the change and best integrate

Google technology in your business — the purpose of our business is to lead our customers on a journey of technology improvement in their business.

What can a business do to make sure that all their files are backed up so no data is ever lost?

If you're running cloud software, you cannot completely disregard the need for data backup and protection.

It's highly unlikely that a top tier cloud provider, such as Google or Microsoft, would lose your data. There have been extremely rare and isolated events, however, it's unlikely that a data loss event would happen to you when your files are stored, for example, in Google Drive.

While the systems themselves are almost 100 per cent reliable, there is always a risk from the people side of things.

Human error causing data loss is quite common and there is a much higher risk of malicious damage such as an employee leaving and deleting files on their way out. For these reasons, we always recommend having an additional third party backup of any cloud system your business uses.

What are the essential qualities or attributes of successful entrepreneurs?

To be an entrepreneur, you've got to be a bit nuts!

I think most entrepreneurs tend to have something to prove, especially in the early days. They maybe have a chip on their shoulder, a boss they want to prove wrong, or an ambition to be in control of their own destiny.

These factors can be good fuel in the early days, but it's not necessarily the most sustainable driver for long-term happiness, prosperity and balance.

As entrepreneurs mature and get past the initial stages of grit, hard work and hustle, more important qualities develop. This includes self-reflection, humility and the ability to lead with selflessness. This means putting others in front of you, allowing others to shine, developing team members and coaching other team members. In my opinion, these are the qualities a developed entrepreneur should be working on.

What's more, being conscious of yourself and being able to reflect and analyse your actions is one of the most important aspects of entrepreneurship. You are running your own show, often unchecked and you need to self-monitor because apart from your mentors and a few peers, there will be a lot of energy you need to stay in control of.

Is there a significant quote or saying which you live your life by?

There's a quote by Einstein which is something along the lines of, 'Try not to become a man of success, but a man of value'.

To me, this means doing the right thing even when no one's looking or when you might not be the one to benefit most out of a situation. It means playing a fair game with other businesses and doing what's right for the world, for the economy and for your industry.

I have had plenty of opportunities to get a one-up on our competitors or to step on somebody else to build my castle, as the saying goes. Every time I've had that opportunity, I have chosen not to. I want to play a fair game and I really believe in karma and doing the right thing.

The relationships you build with your customers transcend the business you're in. You may have another business in the future or

you may change industry. To continue your journey, your current relationships need to go beyond a right here, right now transaction.

To give an example, I have a sole operator customer who is far from my largest or most valuable. However, I recently discovered by chance that they happen to do regular business as a supplier to my largest customer.

If I was to do the wrong thing by that smaller customer, all it would take is a casual mention to my larger customer how I'd treated that individual and the result could severely impact my business.

I think this is a great example of treating everybody the same way; with integrity, honesty and with your best intentions at heart.

What do you see as the major opportunities in business over the next five to ten years?

Businesses all over the world have the opportunity to leverage technology for growth.

Consider the most successful businesses in the world right now. Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, Apple, they're all technology companies and they're all driving business, commerce, and our humanity forward through the use of intelligent technology. I'm not saying every business has to develop its own technology, rather that every business has the opportunity to leverage what's out there.

Small businesses which will succeed over the next decade are thinking about how technology might disrupt their industry, their business model and their internal functions.

Business owners should consider what Google, Amazon, Facebook or Apple might do if they wanted to break into their industry. They should view how they will do things differently at scale and what they

would create if they had a billion dollars to invest. These types of business owners will find success because they are thinking differently about what the future holds.

Beyond this, the biggest forces driving opportunity that I see are outsourcing, automation, artificial intelligence and faster connections.

Outsourcing is really levelling the playing field in that the next one to two billion people coming online and looking for work are in countries that haven't had the internet before. Organisations of all sizes in developed countries are able to utilise this talent to help scale their businesses.

Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are helping businesses to perform less manual work with the help of technology. This allows us to use our best minds to solve bigger problems and do less manual work. We see this already in the Google G Suite world with something as small as automatically choosing the right chart to visualize your data in a Google spreadsheet.

Faster internet connections globally are also enabling completely new ways of working. For example, a client of ours runs a video production studio. They will go out and shoot a days worth of video, which might be 50 or 100 gigabytes of raw footage. Previously, that business model entailed hiring Australian based staff to edit the videos, work through the footage, and prepare the final product. What our client does instead is put all the raw footage into Google drive, uploading it via a fiber optic connection in less than an hour. Overnight, an editor in Ukraine edits the footage and prepares first drafts of the final product, sending everything back to our client by the morning. The end-to-end video production is achieved at a significantly lower cost of labour meaning better prices for the end customer and more profit for the business owner. That's a win-win! That's not only a global business, but a business which can far outstrip the production capacity and turnaround of an Australian based editing team.

The power of faster connections combined with outsourcing allow a very different business service to be delivered to customers. There is more value to the end consumer as they are receiving a more affordable and faster service.

I challenge you to think about how these new opportunities might disrupt your industry or business model and how you can align yourself to prosper in the face of the changes ahead.

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BUSINESS WITH PURPOSE



MELISSA ABU-GAZALEH

“ This journey never gets easier, but we do get stronger. No two days are the same and my judgement, skills and knowledge are continually tested and stretched. However, I’ve come to enjoy problem solving and accepted that this is the predominate skill set I use. ”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mel Abu-Gazaleh'.

MELISSA ABU-GAZALEH

The daughter of Jordanian immigrants, Melissa Abu-Gazaleh was born in Wollongong, NSW in 1986. Growing up under the strong influence of hard-working parents, Melissa finished High School before completing a Bachelor of Communication and Media Studies (Marketing) from the University of Wollongong and a Diploma of Community Services from TAFE.

At age 19, Melissa founded and became CEO of the Top Blokes Foundation. This groundbreaking organisation is focused on improving the mental health and wellbeing of young men in Australia. Since its inception, the Top Blokes Foundation has worked with over 11,000 at-risk youth and become Australia's leading social education organisation for young people.

Melissa believes empowering young men to challenge and redefine their own thoughts and behaviours is key to reducing many social issues including youth suicide, family violence, drugs, alcohol and other anti-social and risk-taking behaviours. She leads a committed team who share her vision for a brighter future.

In 2017, Melissa was awarded EY's Social Entrepreneur of the Year. She was 2016's NSW Young Australian of the Year and named in Australian Financial Review's Top 100 Women of Influence.

An accomplished public speaker as well as entrepreneur, Melissa sits on a number of boards and has presented at many national and state based men's health conferences.

From a young woman with passion to CEO of a social venture, Melissa overcame a number of challenges to learn the ropes of running a company during her twenties. Today, she and her team deliver innovative social education programs which encourage young men to be healthy and safe.

Melissa currently resides in Sydney with her husband. She is as passionate as ever about empowering young men to be agents of change, not tomorrow, but today.

Tell us about your family background and the influence it had on you as you were growing up?

My parents married in Jordan and immediately migrated to Australia during the 1970s. They had a simple wish: to give their future children the chance to go to university. Both my parents wanted to ensure that my siblings and I could enjoy the educational opportunities they were never able to access.

We grew up as a working-class family. From very early on, I watched my father have a stellar work ethic. He worked at the local steel factory and often put in back-to-back shifts to give us a comfortable lifestyle.

When I was nine, my father had a workplace accident and passed away. My mother was suddenly alone, with three children to raise and her only support gone. While our family overseas encouraged my mother to pack up and head back to Jordan, she refused. From here, I saw my mother rise. She stepped up, learnt English fluently, secured her first paid employment and today has a career supporting refugees to settle in Australia. My mother is brave, determined and fierce.

Watching both my parents, I learnt that despite your background or education, hard work and grit can lead to achieving any goal. I gained my work ethic from both parents and now aim to use my skills and ambitions to make a significant impact on young men's health, which is an issue I'm passionate about.

What made you decide to start the Top Blokes Foundation and where did the idea come from?

I never intended to start a social venture!

I was a young female who wanted to see change in the community. That passion for change started at 19 when I began to notice how

unfairly young men were portrayed in the media. I noticed that each night, TV screens were bombarding us with images of young men provoking alcohol-fuelled violence, reckless driving and vandalism. These men were painted as liabilities to our community.

I began researching and found that the top two causes of death for young men aged 18-24 in Australia were suicide and road accidents — two very preventable causes. Parents were frantically asking, “How do we save our boys?” and phrases like ‘boy crisis’ began to emerge.

Whether this is the result of absent fathers or because young men have become the so-called ‘misguided generation’, there was an increasing call for something to be done.

Initially, I wanted to volunteer with an existing organisation and empower young men to change this culture for themselves. My goal was to give them the skills, knowledge and platform to challenge the stereotypes the media held against them.

The problem was, I searched for any organisation that delved into this very issue and there weren’t any. So I did what any other frustrated, Gen Y, impatient person would do, I said, “Screw it, I’ll start something myself”.

I learnt in this moment that if the opportunity isn’t there, sometimes you have to create it yourself.

Once you had the idea for Top Blokes Foundation, what were the first steps you took?

I was at a point where I had the idea, but didn’t know where to start. Fortunately, at this time, I attended a leadership seminar where the presenter challenged us to write down our five-year vision.

My good friend beside me wrote how he wanted to wake up to his butler serving him breakfast (I wish I had thought of that!). I wrote down my vision for the Top Blokes Foundation.

After this, the presenter encouraged us to write down two simple things we could do by the end of the week to get us one step closer to achieving that five-year vision. In my notes, I put that I would listen to motivational tapes to stay focused. The next thing I would do is buy a business book, because I seriously had no clue how to get an idea off the ground.

After the seminar, I went to a book store, stumbled upon the business section, picked up and bought a business book. That book was *Secrets of Male Entrepreneurs Exposed* by Dale Beaumont. That's why being invited by Dale to contribute to this book is a beautiful 360° moment for me.

In the early days, I found myself reading that book a number of times. A common theme emerged, which was that each entrepreneur who was interviewed had a mentor at some point in their journeys. This prompted me to research what a mentor does and how to get one.

A few weeks later, I decided at the last minute to attend a small business event and hear a business consultant speak. Towards the end, I worked up the confidence to approach her and share my business idea. She gave me her business card and suggested we meet up for coffee. It wasn't too long before she took me under her wing and showed me the ropes of running my own business.

Those actions, which may seem small, kick-started what is now the Top Blokes Foundation, Australia's leading movement to empower the next generation of boys to be healthy and safe. The key aims of the foundation are to deliver innovative social education

“ In the early days, I found myself reading that book a number of times. ”

“ I was 20 and registered as CEO of the Top Blokes Foundation. ”

and peer-mentoring programs to boys and young men aged 10-24 years old.

Youth workers from the Top Blokes Foundation provide mentoring to improve mental well-being and build self-efficacy. To date, we have mentored over 11,000 young men. We

believe that engaging boys at critical points within their prime risk-taking stages provides a window of opportunity to alter dangerous or regrettable decisions.

In the beginning, what skills were you lacking and how did you close the gap?

When I started out, I lacked every basic skill to run a small operation (I even had to Google what payroll meant). From the get-go, I just threw myself into building my business, which, reflecting back, was the best way to do it.

Before I knew it, I was 20 and registered as CEO of the Top Blokes Foundation. What I didn't realise about being CEO was that it was now my responsibility to not only learn but to drive all of the various business functions.

It took me a while to understand the difference between a profit and loss statement and a balance sheet (they were all just numbers to me). In fact, I remember sitting in a board meeting with my directors who saw that I had a lost look on my face while they were discussing the financial reports. I couldn't keep up with how they were interpreting the numbers. One director broke it down for me, "Melissa, all you need to know is that brackets on a financial statement means a loss. If you see brackets, work harder."

I learnt very quickly that if I was serious about launching the Top Blokes Foundation, I needed to learn basic business principles. I began declining invitations to university parties. My Friday and Saturday nights were instead spent learning about corporate governance, product development and strategic and operational plans.

I held the belief that if I lacked knowledge or specific skills, it was my responsibility to learn. So here are the key actions I took:

1. I bought business books and made sure to allocate time to read, even if for 20 minutes a day.
2. I found two mentors. My first mentor and I entered into a formal arrangement where we had structured meetings. The second was a coffee catch-up once every two months where I could pick their brains to work through any business problems I was facing at that time.
3. I subscribed to some specific industry publications and attended conferences to learn the emerging trends and current issues that I needed to be aware of.
4. I Googled and YouTubed to understand the basics (searching online was the most proficient skill I had at 20 years old).

Over the years, as the Top Blokes Foundation grew, I began to outsource functions where it made financial sense to do so. For example, during one of our growth periods, we tripled our staff numbers within six months. Our internal processes and infrastructure needed to keep up. Instead of hiring a permanent HR Manager, I outsourced to a HR consultant who immediately worked on the key HR areas within our tight timeframes.

As businesses and working environments evolve, we will all continue to find gaps in our skill-sets. To turn this into a habit, when I notice I'm missing a specific skill or area of knowledge I purposely spend the next six months acquiring those skills.

What challenges did you face in the beginning of your business and how did you overcome them?

In the first 12 months, it was difficult to gain traction. Ten years ago, men's health (let alone young men's health) was rarely recognised as an issue. I remember speaking to a prospective sponsor who thought the idea was so ridiculous that he laughed right through the phone line. He said that young men bring these issues upon themselves and don't deserve support. Then he hung up on me. Despite this, my conviction remained strong and I soldiered on.

Another challenge I faced was the perception of my age. At 22 years old, I was in the midst of securing our largest corporate partnership with one of Australia's leading companies (top 20 ASX). I attempted two pitches and was hit with instant rejections.

One night, I received a call at 9:30pm. It was an executive asking that I submit a brand new proposal by 9:00am the next morning. Knowing I could easily dismiss what seemed like another opportunity for rejection, something within me whispered to try just one more time.

Despite having little feedback on how I could improve, I stayed up all night and put together a bold new proposal, delivering it to his inbox by 8:30am. Soon after, he asked that I meet with him to discuss the new proposal.

Knowing he already had a copy, I arrived at his office with only my notebook and handbag. From there, he led me to a large boardroom where four senior executives were waiting for me to deliver a presentation. With nothing but my notebook in hand, it quickly became clear that this was my 'do or die' moment. I gave an impromptu presentation (I still don't remember what I said) and afterwards, with no indication of what anybody thought, the executive walked me out.

A few days later he called to confirm we had a deal. I couldn't help myself, I asked, "A 9.30pm phone call, no warning about meeting with your colleagues and expecting a formal presentation with no brief?"

He responded, "Melissa, you're young and we needed to know that you can handle the pressures and expectations that comes with handling so much corporate money. You did well."

I'm still not sure how I feel about that experience, but I learnt that whenever opportunity comes knocking, you should always be open to giving it your best shot.

Do you believe the same principles in running a business apply to running a foundation?

Traditionally, non-profits operated differently to businesses. However, times have changed. Today, we see a blend between charitable and business principles.

At the Top Blokes Foundation, just like many successful businesses, we've focused on incorporating commercial principles to future-proof our work. We've diversified income streams and are always prepared in the event that one of our larger income sources dries up.

We also attach a price value to our service. To move towards financial sustainability and ensure we have enough working capital to scale our work, we ensure we price our products at market rate.

This has been the rise of social enterprises, that is commercial ventures set up to specifically address a social issue for example, a cafe that employs people experiencing homelessness.

Charities who don't adapt to new trends find it difficult to survive in the changing climate. Governments are now putting pressure on organisations to become more commercially savvy and to work towards

“ I love how we are forever scaling mountains yet the climb never ends. ”

being less reliant on government funding and grants. Reflecting back, the Top Blokes Foundation has had to be agile and commercially minded from the beginning in order to survive.

As a woman, why do you take men's health and wellbeing so seriously?

This is one of the questions I get asked the most!

Often people ask if I started the Top Blokes Foundation because I had a brother battle a drug addiction (nope, but it would have been a juicier story for me to use). The simple answer is that when I realised there was a need to support young men, I saw myself as an active citizen who thought she could make a meaningful contribution. Being female didn't come into it.

I believe we all have a role to play to ensure boys have the right support to grow into healthy young men.

What do you love most about running your own business?

As an entrepreneur, I love how we are forever scaling mountains yet the climb never ends.

This journey never gets easier, but we do get stronger. No two days are the same and my judgement, skills and knowledge are continually tested and stretched. However, I've come to enjoy problem solving and accepted that this is the predominate skill set I use.

There is nothing better than setting BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goals) then working with my team to develop their skills and talents so we can reach new heights together.

You're often seen speaking on stage, do you think public speaking is an important skill for an entrepreneur?

Speaking at corporate events, conferences and young leaders' events has become an essential avenue to educate others on both young men's health and social entrepreneurship.

In the early days, I couldn't sleep the night before I was due to give a speech, even if it was a small event. I would have so many thoughts running through my mind, like 'Do they really want to listen to me or are they obligated to be there? What if my jokes aren't funny? Can we give them a refund if they didn't like it?'

To overcome the nerves, I found a speaking coach, who over 12 months, helped me draft a signature speech, worked on my voice projection and showed me how to use a stage.

When my speaking profile began to grow, I was adamant that any fees generated were to be paid directly to the Top Blokes Foundation to fund more programs for young men. Within a few years, I was accepting as many as one speaking engagement per week. I then engaged another speaking coach who helped me build the business side of my speaking. Together, we developed a strategic plan for my speaking, polished the speaking brand and negotiated speaking fees. By mastering the skill of speaking, I have been able to provide another solid revenue stream to the Top Blokes Foundation.

The key for me is putting hours into practicing. As a general rule, I practice each speech at least ten times. When you practice enough, it takes away the nerves. When you practice so much that it becomes repetitive, your body will remember the speech.

Years ago, I was speaking at an event and was trying a new presentation and implemented the 'practice a minimum of ten times rule'. When I was on stage, I was doing well, until I had a mind blank. I just couldn't remember my next sentence. Fortunately, while my brain

was beginning to stress, my body just naturally came out with the next sentence. Remember, if you want to excel in public speaking, when you deliver a presentation on stage, it should not be the first time you have tested it.



Melissa on stage, inspiring others

What tips do you have for using the media to help spread the word of your business?

As a social venture, we have a minimal marketing budget. We use the media as it's an inexpensive way to achieve profile and reach. That being said, it can be incredibly difficult to get your foot in the door with media. They often want a newsworthy story, and unless you are launching new products every month, it can be difficult to sustain a media presence.

Here's what I've learnt about the media; they won't wait for you. Our most successful media pieces have come to us with less than two hours notice.

A few years back, there was an emerging story of an influential personality and his misogynistic behaviours. The discussion was centred on whether this was becoming the new masculinity. As this was unfolding, we tweeted our opinion on the matter. Within 15

minutes, we had a phone call from Channel 10's *The Project* asking if we could get in the studios within two hours to comment. We dropped everything to make it happen.

Another time, a report had just been released showing a link between young boys watching pornography and a decline in their mental health. ABC News24 called us at 2:00pm on a Friday afternoon asking if we could get to the studio and do a live interview at 3:30pm. Earlier that day I had deemed it pyjama day in the office. With no make-up on and barely brushed hair, I wondered if I could actually get away with wearing ugg boots to the studio. The look my staff gave me suggested otherwise! So, I asked one of my male program managers to join me and we travelled to the studio (after a quick change of clothes).

My advice when it comes to the media is to be available. The fast pace of the daily news cycle means it is hard for them to plan ahead. If you can't make the appearance, they'll be quick to ask someone else who can accommodate their short deadlines.

If I could sum up my key learnings with the media, I would say:

- Learn how to write effective media releases or outsource it to an agency or PR freelancer who can.
- If you try the traditional method of writing a press release with no luck, try other ways to connect with journalists. In the past I've found which journalists specialise in our fields of topic. I follow them on Twitter and pitch articles.
- Develop your key messages and position statements. For us, news outlets often want us to share our view on contentious issues like pornography or domestic violence. These issues are highly debated and we need to maintain a clear position.
- Take up media training. There are a number of well-regarded media coaches you could engage. If cost is an issue, see if you can find

public workshops or a person within your network (start with LinkedIn).

- Ensure the purpose of your media is more than just promoting your products. Link it to the social impact you are making. This will help you stand out in a crowded marketplace.
- Don't make it difficult for journalists to chase you. Be prepared, easy to reach and well-researched. Make their job easy and they'll come back to you for more media opportunities in the future.

In summary, often it's easy to say to yourself, "I won't write a media release unless I know they'll cover it", but just put the effort in. One piece of media can be a game changer for you. Don't miss out on the opportunity because of a little hard work or a fear of rejection.

What do you think are essential qualities or attributes of successful entrepreneurs and do you have any tips to becoming a great entrepreneur?

Growth rarely comes from playing it safe. First and foremost, a successful entrepreneur is able to take calculated risks. I've learnt that using good judgement and placing controls to mitigate risk is when the rewards will come.

Secondly, I believe it is important to be a generous leader. To me, this relates to the principles of service leadership. I feel that a major part of my role is to provide the right support and mentorship to help the team score goals.

Finally, a successful business leader must use sound judgement to assess opportunities. For example, once the Top Bloke Foundation had built some momentum, we began receiving invitations to partner with other entities. On the surface these were enticing, but would ultimately distract us from our core mission and dilute our brand.

What does leadership mean to you and how did you develop it?

A leader knows when to lead and when to follow.

In our very early growth stage, I employed an Operations Manager whose ability to deliver and execute was incredibly high. She brought in knowledge I didn't have and shared the same vision.

In high level investment meetings, we would both attend and she would lead the meeting. It was very common for the investors, while confirming details of yet another large deal, to comment 'You didn't do much talking'. I would reply with 'You can see why I didn't need to. I look forward to our partnership.'

Our role as leaders is to develop the talent of our staff and move out of the way for them to shine. However, we must also judge when it's time to step in and lead them through a tough situation or challenging phase of the business.

What is the best piece of business advice anyone has ever given you?

Years ago, we had a new director join our board. We had a one-on-one meeting and he wanted to gauge how sustainable the Top Blokes Foundation was.

This man said to me, "Melissa, if you were hit by a bus tomorrow, how long would Top Blokes survive without you? Three months?"

I replied, "Three months? More like three weeks. I'm the one holding it all together."

”” Secondly,

I believe it is important to be a generous leader. ””

That's when I learnt this valuable lesson, one of the biggest risks we faced was 'key person risk'. That is, if I suddenly needed to take extended leave, my staff wouldn't know how to handle all areas of the business.

If I didn't address this and something was to happen to me, it would be a disservice to my staff and ultimately the young men we were trying to help. From that point, I quickly learnt the importance of building financial and operational sustainability across the organisation.

We focus on cross-skilling teams to handle different business functions and building contingency plans to protect us in the future. Now, as a team, we always use the 'hit by a bus' question to test if we have systemised our work well enough for anyone to be able to take the reigns.

Do you believe people should only do what they are passionate about? Or should people also be doing something that makes money?

Can you imagine how much happier the world would be if we could all follow our passions? Fairy floss and puppies everywhere! Unfortunately, the reality is that there needs to be a mix of both.

I couldn't see myself doing anything other than the Top Blokes Foundation and the only way to do this was to build enough commercial sustainability in the organisation that I could draw a salary.

There is always a way to turn a passion into income, despite how ridiculous you might think your passion is. Remember, there are people on Instagram making a fortune from filming their cats. My advice is to find examples of others who have turned their passions into income, and learn from them. Connect with them, ask them for an online chat session and find out how they did it and what their first few steps were.

It is equally okay to have your day job that brings in income while pursuing your passion on the side.

What do you see as the major opportunities in business over the next five to ten years?

The single most significant opportunity will be the blending of the social and business sectors. Often called the Purpose Economy, more businesses will look to address critical social issues like poverty, disadvantage and the environment.

Historically, businesses have defined success by profit, growth or reach, however, companies are now taking opportunities to produce qualitative social change. Investor priorities are also shifting, where they often prioritise ventures that have a direct social impact. As a person in the world of social ventures, it's pleasing to see this blend of business and social enterprising.

I believe that moving forward, businesses will be left behind if they don't become socially responsible and responsive.

What are some other practical things that you do to stay focused and on track every day?

When the Top Blokes Foundation experiences huge growth spurts, my role becomes complex. In these times, I try to simplify my daily work plan to stay efficient within my role. To do this, I do the following:

1. Keep a task log and track how long I spend on each task. At the end of each week, (then again each month), I review the log and determine which areas of work I could eliminate, delegate or outsource. I found after doing this for three months and finding ways to effectively delegate or automate tasks, I was able to free up five hours a week. That's five new hours to spend on our strategic growth.

2. It can be hard to escape working in the day-to-day operations to focus on the bigger issues your business faces. As the saying goes, 'It's hard to get a new idea working from the desk'. To combat this, I aim to be away from the office at least one day a fortnight to work on strategic matters and give myself thinking time.
3. Living in Sydney, traffic can be horrendous. On most days, driving to our different offices could take me up to 1.5 hours each way (three hours a day). That's a lot of time in a car so I swapped driving with taking the train when possible. I tried this for one week and found that travel time was approximately the same, however, I suddenly had three additional hours to catch up on work on the train. Now, I know I can catch up on unfinished work or walk into the office with several things already crossed off my to-do list. I can also walk in the door at the end of the day and switch off from work for the night.

Having achieved so much success at a young age, what advice would you give to young entrepreneurs who are looking to start a business?

If I could sum up my key learnings starting the Top Blokes Foundation at a young age, I would say:

1. The only time success comes before work is in the dictionary. Don't get caught up in the glamorous lifestyle that you think comes with owning a business. You can't escape the sacrifices, challenges and disappointments to achieve your goals.
2. Be so good they can't ignore you: if you don't know how to start, begin by talking to others who have been there. Find a mentor and learn as much as you can. Reach for excellence and you'll find people knocking on your door.
3. Fall in love with problem solving. I found this became the essence of my role, there isn't a day where I don't need to find solutions

to our existing challenges. Be a great problem solver and watch the business move forward and thrive.

4. We will all develop our own leadership style, but kindness should always be a key element. Empower your team to reach their best, be kind to your customers and don't dismiss those who can't do anything for you.
5. Listen and appreciate feedback. It's one of the hardest things to do. It's putting ego aside and listening for ways to make the business stronger. The times we received harsh feedback, I found merit in what they were saying and made instant changes. Often, those changes led to us growing further and becoming stronger.

SERVICE AT SCALE



KODY THOMPSON

“ Our staff are based around the world because talent doesn't live in one place. We currently employ 22 wonderfully committed and karaoke-obsessed staff in the Philippines. Without them, there is no way that we would have had the success that we have. ”

Kody Thompson

KODY THOMPSON

Hailing from Bendigo in Victoria, Kody Thompson is the CEO of a hugely successful online development business, Lightning Sites.

Kody was welcomed into the world during the tail-end of the 1980s. From a young age, he exhibited a passion and flair for creativity, and was drawn to helping others. During high school, he interned with major advertising agency Clemenger before being offered a scholarship to the company's private design academy.

Kody had his sights set on a future in the world of art and design, however, his goals were sidetracked by the loss of several close friends to suicide. Fuelled by a desire to bring hope to the younger generation, Kody began volunteering, with the goal of helping youth who had lost meaning and purpose in their lives.

Turning down his sought-after scholarship, Kody instead combined a graphic design degree and youth work diploma. After working full-time as a pastor for three and a half years, Kody and his wife Sarah set out on a new adventure. With an unpaid role lined up at a church on the Gold Coast, Kody founded his own freelance graphic design agency.

What began as a strategy to pay the bills quickly turned into a love affair with entrepreneurship and helping other people who are in business.

Kody's first business, DesignFox, began with \$250 worth of business cards. It has now evolved into Lightning Sites, an operation which has turned over \$1 million in profit since 2013 and which employs a staff of over 22 people.

Throughout his journey, Kody has focused on working to make the world a better place. As well as being a highly energetic entrepreneur, Kody is passionate about charity fundraising and providing housing for disadvantaged families in South East Asia.

Why did you start your graphic design business?

I never started out to be an entrepreneur. In fact, it all happened by accident.

After finishing school, I began working with teenagers as a youth pastor in a Christian church. I was drawn to helping others, especially after having lost several friends to suicide in my teenage years. It broke my heart that they thought ending their life was their only option.

I really loved working with teenagers and ran leadership programs and school initiatives for several years. All the while, I was completing my degree in Graphic Design. When I finished my degree, I continued to work as a pastor and honestly thought this would be my career for life.

In January 2013, my wife and I felt it was time to begin a new adventure away from our hometown of Bendigo. I had a number of offers for staffed positions around Australia, however, the one I settled on was a volunteer position. We knew it was the right decision, but looking back, I can see why people thought we were out of our minds. I had turned down a full-time salary, company car and phone for a handshake and an empty payslip.

We had very little savings and there were no paid jobs waiting for us when we got to the Gold Coast. With a few months to spare before we left, I decided that I would start freelancing as a Graphic Designer. This would earn some money and get us through the move.

How did you grow in the early days? What did you do to find customers?

If you're choosing a career to make money, then being a pastor (me) and a teacher (my wife, Sarah) is not the right option. These are careers you do for love, not for a big fat paycheck.

“ If you want it badly enough, you’ll work your butt off to make it happen. ”

Thus, when I chose to start my business, I didn’t have any resources to get me off the ground. There was no fancy office, no team of employees and no extensive budget to get me started. All I had was my iMac computer and myself.

After coming up with the name Design Fox, I spent \$150 printing business cards and another \$100 purchasing a WordPress theme and budget hosting package. With my bank account all but wiped, I used YouTube to teach myself WordPress and built my own website.

It took me around 200 hours. Crazy, right? I remember telling Sarah, “I’ll never go into business building people websites”.

Once I finally completed my website, I hit the streets, going from door to door in Bendigo’s business district handing out my cards to every business owner I could find. Over a three month period, I handed out all 1,000 of the business cards I had printed.

All I wanted was the opportunity to show people my portfolio and land an opportunity for a test project. Most people weren’t interested and I had my fair share of rejections. I would arrive home exhausted, deflated and at a loose end because I hadn’t won any business.

There were times I questioned my ability to make this work. But somewhere inside of me I held onto the belief that, when the time came, we would have the money for our move. I knew a hundred people might turn me down, but if I could just get that *one* connection with a business that I could delight, then perhaps it could be the catalyst for my next connection.

That was probably my first important lesson in business. The great things in life — the things that you want really badly — are never

handed to you on a golden platter. If you want it badly enough, you'll work your butt off to make it happen.

You then hit an income ceiling in your business, can you explain what happened?

Within 12 months of launching Design Fox, I was run off my feet with work. The phone was ringing constantly, the emails were pouring in and my network was growing. The problem I had now was that I couldn't keep up with the work.

At this point, there was one phrase constantly in my mind, 'Please God, don't let this phone call be another flyer request!'

Because I never planned on Design Fox becoming a business, I hadn't implemented any real systems to make it work. In fact, my accounting 'system' was a spreadsheet I made on excel and my task management procedure involved small squares of paper pinned to a board. I am convinced to this day that half the people I was doing work for never even paid me because I kept forgetting to send invoices!

I didn't have a clue how to run a business. I knew I needed help so I reached out to my Dad, who was working as the CEO of one of Australia's largest poultry producers. He recommended I seek out a business coach who had experienced the challenges that I was facing and overcome them. This is when I met Dale Beaumont and attended his one-day business workshop.

You then transitioned to selling and supporting websites on a subscription model, why did you change your business model?

After starting coaching with Dale, I managed to double my businesses revenue for two years running. The more I grew the company, the more I realised there were significant flaws in my current business model.

Selling projects on a time-for-money basis was a real problem. The list of flaws read something like this:

1. The only way we could make more money was by increasing our prices or hiring a huge amount of new staff.
2. We were delivering too many types of design services. This was resulting in a bottleneck of *my* time and lowered work quality across the board.
3. We had no guaranteed income each month, which made it difficult to understand how and when we could scale up.
4. We were always searching for new work. That meant we were never able to fully focus on delivering service and quality to our existing client base.

What I needed was a model that could be easily replicated and resold multiple times. Something that could be delivered without relying on my time or compromising on quality.

Our second realisation was that selling websites in the traditional 'large upfront cost' manner wasn't an ideal service for customers. Client projects would often drag on for months or years and additional support was always required after the build was complete.

I listened to customers who would tell me how hard it was to raise a huge initial budget and then find it wasn't enough to cover ongoing costs. Others would tell me their developer had not delivered on quality or support, leaving them stranded and over budget.

Ultimately, these business owners were forced to carry the burden of risk and uncertainty for the project. I decided to reconstruct my business model for selling websites, basing it entirely on what my customers really wanted.

My team and I poured all our effort and skill into creating website templates, streamlining delivery systems so we could produce

exceptional work at high speed. We started reproducing these websites for a small upfront cost. This allowed business owners to get a high quality website with all the bells and whistles for under \$500 and only \$99 per month thereafter. These sites included CRM integration, SEO optimisation, landing page creation, Facebook remarketing integration and more.

We also introduced a 200 per cent money back guarantee. This gave the client a 30 day period to request a refund if they didn't get the website they wanted. Because we had streamlined our delivery systems, we were able to guarantee a delivery time of just 10 business days. Once each website was complete, all their hosting and ongoing support costs were included in a fixed fee and cash flow friendly subscription.

To top it off, due to the ever-changing nature of the internet, we also offered to refresh our clients websites every 24 months. That way, they would never have to buy a new website again.

What effect did changing your focus have on your income and cash flow?

Before launching the new model, I had reservations about moving away from the upfront costs traditionally favoured in this industry.

Going from selling sites for between \$5,000 and \$20,000 to selling them for as low as \$300 upfront was quite a significant change. I wasn't sure we would be able to make the same profits and I worried that customers might assume that cheap meant we were cutting corners on quality.

However, once we launched the subscription model I knew we were onto a winning product within a

“ We also introduced a 200 per cent money back guarantee. ”

couple of weeks. We started receiving a flood of orders immediately, and the client satisfaction at the end of the projects skyrocketed. We would get numerous referrals from each client and the whole thing snowballed from there.

Design Fox, which we soon rebranded to Lightning Sites, quickly picked up subscribers and every month our recurring revenue climbed higher and higher. Initially, I still took some custom projects to help pay the bills, but within a matter of months we were able to cut all our other service offerings out and double down on our subscription service.

This level of focus had a dramatic effect on the company's income and cash flow. Not only did we double our revenue we also took our profitability to over 55 per cent. This one decision had caused us to quadruple our profits that financial year.

You now work with hundreds of business owners to help them to build great websites. What platforms should people be using?

When considering a platform to build your website on, there are three non-negotiables that apply to most small businesses.

1. *The platform needs to allow for both current and future feature requirements* — You need to build a website that achieves the business results you're looking for today, while also offering the flexibility to make the most of future opportunities.
2. *You need to be able to edit and manage the website within your own team* — The business landscape changes rapidly. You need to be able to adjust your business model, services and website without relying on web developers. When commissioning a website, you need to make sure it is built on a CMS (content management system) which allows you to make any content changes yourself quickly.

3. *The platform must be open source* — There will be times when you need a web developer to help you make changes. With this in mind, you need to make sure your website is built on a platform that is easy for other developers to use. This gives you flexibility to choose any developer you like and will help to keep your costs down.

If you're working from this criteria, then there's only a handful of platforms that really meet your requirements. The most popular of which is WordPress, which today powers over 25 per cent of the internet. This is our chosen platform and most highly recommended.

How much should someone pay for websites these days?

Businesses may be afraid of low cost website options because they believe they need to spend thousands to get a good site. They don't. At Lightning Sites, we have made it possible for 90 per cent of small businesses to get a high converting website for a setup fee of under \$500.

Of course, some websites require a higher level of customisation or the owners prefer to pay the full amount upfront. In these cases, a website would cost at least \$5,000. This includes working with an experienced developer who can guarantee work quality.

My advice if you're looking to rein in your budget would be to avoid trying to reinvent the wheel. Use a systemised and templated approach to building your website and use existing third party tools where possible rather than creating custom features from scratch.

What is a responsive website and why is it so important for businesses?

Today, around 70 per cent of web visitors use mobile devices to access sites. They don't want to navigate difficult menus, trying to expand or

minimise text, clicking tiny dropdowns and closing oversized popups. In fact, they won't do it. They will just go somewhere else.

It's absolutely essential that websites are optimised for mobile. With a responsive website, the content and pages are tailored to your device and screen resolution. If you're accessing from a tablet, you can fully utilise the site. If you're accessing from a mobile, the site will be shown to you in a different format with an easy access 'burger' menu at the top. This approach to web design provides an optimal experience for every user, regardless of the device they are using.

A responsive website design improves the user experience which in turn produces better results. If you're browsing an onsite catalogue but can't view the pictures, click on descriptions or access the shopping cart, are you really going to buy from it? If your customers can access your website easily on all devices, they're more likely to return to you for more business in the future.

How do you collect leads from your website?

If you want your website to earn you leads, you need to really understand your visitors. You need to know their biggest pain points, problems and desires. What do they want more than anything else? Why did they come to your website?

Once we understand who our visitors are and the problems they are looking to solve, all we need to do is remind them of their needs and show them we have the solution they are looking for. We do this by providing a lead magnet or an irresistible offer. This could be a free video course, discounted product, free eBook, free quote, webinar, white paper, physical products and more.

Once you get the right people visiting your website and you have the right offer to help them along the journey to solving their problem, the leads will flood in.

You also talk about landing pages. How does a landing page differ to your main website?

A landing page is a single, stand alone web page designed for one purpose — to collect leads.

Landing pages are different from regular website pages because they have no menu or links to other pages. With a landing page, all the distractions are removed, allowing you to focus on a particular offer and increase your chances of getting business.

A landing page allows you to do two important things:

Firstly, it allows you to tailor your language and product/service offering to a specific visitor type. Perhaps you only want to promote your offer to females aged 40–60? With a landing page you can tailor your offering for this group without it appearing on your main site and putting off guys aged 18–30. Just as you would personalise a sales phone call in order to achieve greater results, the same can be said of a personalised landing page.

The second thing is that having a dedicated landing page allows you to track and measure your results. You need to be able to see how much you are spending to send visitors to your landing page, and how many of those people are taking up your offer.

By tracking data, you will know exactly how much it is costing you to acquire that customer. You will also know what doesn't work and save money in the future by avoiding it.

Once you collect leads from your website, what should you do with them?

Gathering leads is one thing. Effectively following them up is another.

Visitors who fill out a contact form or sign up on your site will not wait forever to get a response. You need to be efficient, organised and swift in handling your leads.

Most small businesses struggle to keep on top of their daily tasks and following up leads is one of them. It's not their fault. They just need a good system to help them to do it.

Once we have collected the lead we send it into our CRM so that we can follow the prospect up. That's where you definitely need that automation we talked about. From there, you can slowly drip feed the right information to your prospect until they become a customer. Each piece of content you send to the customer builds trust and should be designed to answer their questions until they feel confident enough to buy from you.

The more relevant you make the content, the more trust you can build and the more chance you have of converting the prospect into a paying customer. Leads may also be followed up by a phone call or visit depending on your business. A CRM will send reminders to your sales guys to follow up their prospects so they don't get forgotten.

You're a big believer in creating automated marketing campaigns. Can you tell us what this means and share a few examples?

I'm a believer in automated marketing because it works and makes our lives so much easier.

This scalable strategy allows us to engage with a large audience through a pre-planned sequence of emails, SMS messages and tasks. These strategies are built using a CRM (Client Relation Management) tool and allow you to rapidly scale conversations and streamline workflows in your business. Once set up, they work 24/7 in your

business, saving you a huge amount of time on tasks that would otherwise be manual.

For example, recently I did a launch for a new product we were releasing with one of our brands, WodSites (www.wodsites.co). We wanted to upgrade our clients from a \$99 per month subscription to a \$349 per month subscription which had many more features. We launched with only 50 spaces available and needed to sell these 50 spaces as quickly as possible.

To achieve this, we set up a sequence of 15 automated emails in our CRM. These went out to our database of clients and prospects leading up to the launch date. The sequence was used to educate people on the features of the new product and let them know how they could benefit. It was tailored to each segment of our database to get the highest success rate.

The email sequence generated a lot of interest and we sold the first 28 spots within three hours of launching. If we had tried to achieve the same results with a sales team and phone calls, it would have taken weeks and thousands of dollars to achieve the same result.

What do you think the future of websites and website marketing will involve?

Technology is moving at a really fast pace and it's pretty darn exciting. Every day there's a new tool, a new piece of technology and a new opportunity for us to explore.

Today, websites are crafted by marketers, designers, and developers by hand. These are static sites that are designed once. Although they can be split tested and refined to increase their effectiveness at converting cold

“ I'm a believer in automated marketing because it works and makes our lives so much easier. ”

traffic into enquiries, they still appear the same way to every viewer regardless of their needs, desires and buying behaviours.

In the future, I see that changing.

Websites of tomorrow will be built using AI (artificial intelligence) that allows them to automatically re-design and split test layouts, photo choices and headlines for every guest that visits the site. Even now, personal data and buying behaviours are being collected and used for retargeting and loyalty schemes.

In the future, websites will be directly connected to this data and will be able to adapt to sell differently to every user depending on their motivations and buying behaviours.

I recently saw an augmented reality campaign by IKEA, the Swedish homeware store. It allowed users to upload photos of their living room or bedroom and then insert the catalogue furniture to see how it would look in their own space. That's smart. Viewers want a more immersive experience and augmented reality and artificial intelligence allow for that.

How many staff do you employ overseas and why are you such a fan of outsourcing?

Thanks to technology, we can easily collaborate with people all over the world. Our talent pool for hiring staff is now no longer restricted by geographic location. This means we can find highly skilled staff for a quarter of the cost of hiring local talent for the same position. Commercially, this means we can provide a higher level of service for our clients and at a cheaper price than our competitors.

At Lightning Sites, our staff are based around the world because talent doesn't live in one place. Talent comes in every nationality, gender and personality. We currently employ 22 wonderfully committed

and karaoke-obsessed staff in the Philippines, along with several freelancers around the globe. Without them, there is no way that we would have had the success that we have experienced at Lightning Sites.

Aside from the obvious benefits to the bottom line of your business, the other major benefit for me is the opportunity to make a difference in communities that haven't had the opportunities that we have had growing up in Australia. Today, 22 families are looked after because their husband, wife, partner, son or daughter are employed by Lightning Sites. I am truly humbled by the opportunity to work with such skilled people every time I go to work.



Kody with just some of this team in the Philippines

What advice would you give to someone who has never outsourced staff?

There's a huge misconception among business owners about outsourced staff. They see them as disposable, cheap and exempt from the care,

working conditions and rights of their onsite workforce. Some see them as untrustworthy and monitor them relentlessly.

If you think like this, you will never garner success from an outsourced workforce.

Treat outsourced staff with the same care you would treat any new hire you make locally. Understand that your outsourced staff are entitled to the same fair treatment, training and encouragement you would give your internal team.

Develop clear job descriptions for your outsourced recruits and have realistic expectations around what's possible for any one person to achieve. You haven't hired a robot. You have hired a real life person with limitations, feelings, stresses, skills and weaknesses.

Spend time onboarding, training and setting expectations, and be sure to check in to see how they are doing. Find the balance between being supportive and being overbearing. Nobody wants their work constantly monitored and checked but they *do* want to feel like you're there to help if they need you.

Similarly, don't leave them out when it comes to company incentives and rewards. If they can't join you on your local team building day or dinner, be sure to arrange something they can enjoy in their own country. Ensure your outsourced staff feel valued and they will reward you with their efforts.

Do you believe you have achieved the growth you have because of having outsourced staff?

One of the biggest steps I made in my business was learning to delegate jobs, including administrative tasks, writing, social media, customer support and web development. Rushing them myself would

mean a lower quality of work, reduced customer satisfaction and a block on my ability to grow the business.

Micromanagement is not only outdated but also an extremely ineffective way to motivate and monitor your team. I employ talented, committed people and then trust them to help me achieve growth. It would be impossible for me to focus on the development of the business if I was continuing to focus on all these tasks.

Know your skills, know your limitations and hire the right people to fill in the gaps.

What's the most common mistake new business owners make?

I think I have made every mistake and then some! One of the biggest mistakes of new business owners is simply to give up too early. They quit when things aren't working out the way they had hoped or if the business hasn't taken off as quickly as they would have liked.

Thankfully, I learnt this lesson early on in life.

When I was 18, I wanted to do work experience at Clemenger, one of Australia's top marketing and design agencies. After school, I phoned Clemenger and spoke with a lady about coming in to do some work experience. She advised me that they get hundreds of requests like mine each year and they had a blanket policy that they don't take work experience students.

I was so disappointed but my stepmother asked me, "Kody, how badly do you want it?" She encouraged me to realise that just because someone said no, it didn't mean it was the end of the story. She was right and so I formulated a new plan.

I went into town and bought a large helium balloon, a cardboard box and a basket of mini chocolate bars. I printed my resume with

a huge photo of myself on the cover, attached it to the string of the helium balloon and put it in the box. I filled the rest of the box with chocolates and wrapped the box in gift wrapping. After checking out the company's website, I addressed the box to the manager of Clemenger and couriered it to their office.

A few weeks later, I received a call from the manager.

"I received your gift," he said, "we opened your box in one of our management meetings. We were very impressed with your resume as the balloon floated up out of the box and the team appreciated the chocolates."

Great!

"The only problem was, your resume floated up to the ceiling of our two story lobby ..."

Crap ...

That summer I interned at Clemenger for three weeks. At the end of the program, they offered me a fully paid scholarship to their private design school and a job starting in a few months' time.

If you really want something, you can't let a setback stop you. Just because something is one way for other people, doesn't mean it has to be the same for you. Come at the problem from a different perspective and apply a bit of creativity to it.

Who are your biggest business mentors? What important lessons have you learnt from them?

I will forever regard my Dad as my first great business mentor. Growing up, he rarely spoke about his work as the CEO of Hazeldene's Chicken Farm. Sometimes I would ask him what he did at work and

he would retort with a chicken squawk and tell me he was a Chicken Plucker. It wasn't anything my Dad said that made an impact on the way I viewed business, it was simply watching the way he went about it.

I remember one particular day when I was sick and had to go to work with Dad for the day. We pulled up at the security gate and Dad wound down the window, gave the security guard a huge smile and greeted him by name. You could see the respect in the security guard's eyes as my Dad chatted with him. He remembered the guard's wife had been ill last week and that his son played in the football finals over the weekend. He knew him as a person, not just a security guard.

Walking through the logistics centre where the trucks were cleaned and prepared for deliveries and on through into the factory floor, I watched intently. Dad seemed to know the name of every truck driver and factory worker. He was genuinely interested in their lives and made them feel like they were valued. He was kind to his staff and made people feel like they were important. He carried himself in a way that caused others to respect him. Not because he demanded it, but because they genuinely liked and respected him.

It was an important business lesson for me. If you want to produce great work then you need a dedicated and engaged team. Loyal, engaged people are committed to you and your business and will work hard to help you achieve your goals.

Since then, I have always wanted to be like my Dad in business, and I hope that when my daughter watches me one day, she sees the same thing that I saw then.

Over the past few years, I have been lucky to develop relationships with other talented business people, including Dale Beaumont (who has graciously included me in this book), Maurice Goldberg, Simon Bowen, and Mags Bell to name a few. I am so grateful for their time, their belief, and their input in my life.

What do you think holds many people back from becoming successful entrepreneurs?

Growing up in typical Aussie fashion, my Dad thought it funny to tell me tales of creatures that I had to beware of when roaming outside. Firstly, of course, there were drop bears - ferocious Koalas that drop out of trees to attack you if you aren't careful to look up. Then, there were ring snakes that could bite their own tails to form a wheel and roll down the hill after you. There were also bunyips that lived in lakes and would come out at night to eat people. At the time, I truly believed that these 'animals' were real and I was afraid of them.

I think in business we often make the same mistake.

I have found that sometimes the things that hold us back are things that simply don't exist. They are just things that we believe, whether we have imagined them up ourselves or been 'warned' by other people.

Sometimes we make assumptions about business. We assume that something won't work or something bad will happen. We are afraid to take risks because of our perceived ideas. Other times, it can be other people. They will tell us that 'that idea won't work', 'someone else already does that' or 'there's no other way to do that'. Just like my Dad's drop bears and bunyips, these fears and beliefs can paralyse you if you let them.

Just because things have always been done a certain way doesn't mean they have to stay that way. All the greatest businesses have found a way to reinvent the rules of the game.

What is one of the keys to the success of your business?

If I'm honest, when I started my business I was looking to meet my own needs instead of the needs of others. Today, I try my best to

regard others above myself. The most important thing I have learned is that my success is inherently linked to the success of others.

If we can help our customers become more successful in their business ventures then they will be happier with our services and refer us to their friends and colleagues.

I look to create an environment where my staff are deeply valued and given opportunities to improve their lives and build a greater future for their families. This way, I am able to build a highly engaged and loyal team that will drive the success of our business.

In life and in business, people can be selfish. How much money am I making? Are my staff working hard enough for me? How can I grab more business from my competitors? But actually, we don't need to be this way.

By focusing on providing positive experiences to others, we in turn benefit.

Free BONUS GIFT

Kody Thompson has kindly offered a FREE BONUS GIFT valued at \$24.95 to all readers of this book.

5 Ways To Double Your Website Leads In The Next 30 Days — From starting his first business with just \$250 to making \$1 million in profit in five years, Kody has learnt a lot and is now ready to share his knowledge. In this five-part video series, Kody will show you actionable strategies that will dramatically boost the number of enquiries you receive through your website.

Simply visit the web page below and follow the directions to download:

www.SecretsExposed.com.au/successful-entrepreneurs

NO PLAN B



SUE-ELLEN WATTS

“ You are whatever age you are, you have whatever history and circumstances you have. The truth is, no one cares! Just go for it. Life is too long and too short not to try. Leverage what you have and go start that business! ”

Sue-ellen Watts

SUE-ELLEN WATTS

Known to many simply as Sel, Sue-Ellen Watts has continually disrupted the HR industry since her career began over 17 years ago.

Launching Brisbane-based HR business **wattsnext**, in 2007, Sue-Ellen has been on a steep learning curve to say the least. The business was opened just before the 2008 Global Financial Crisis with no business plan, no financial backing, no local connections and a newborn baby!

Today, Sue-Ellen leads a team of forward-thinking and results-driven HR ninjas who strategise, innovate, engage and get things done. She now has a true understanding of what it takes to grow a business and has only grown her love and passion for entrepreneurialism.

Sue-Ellen is proud to have been recognised as a finalist in Telstra Queensland Business Women's Awards and named Owner Manager of the Year at the Australian Institute of Management Awards. This is despite lacking official qualifications, and dropping out of university three times.

Outside of **wattsnext**, Sue-Ellen is involved with two startup businesses. The first, Scrappi, is a reverse incubator which enables 'intrapreneurs' to be part of the world of entrepreneurship. She also co-founded zzoota, which predicts environmental hazards.

Despite not finishing her formal tertiary education, Sue-Ellen has a deep love of learning and is a professional development addict. She has built her business prowess from external sources, including many hours of coaching, mentoring, courses, workshops, conferences and networking events. Sue-Ellen now sits on the board of the Entrepreneurs Organisation and the Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce. In both positions her focus is on the growth of entrepreneurs.

This committed business owner is a proud mother to three sons who are learning a lot about resilience, gratitude, never settling and striving for their dreams with everything they have.

When did you first discover you had entrepreneurial talent?

When I started my business, the word entrepreneur was not the buzzword it is today. In fact, it still had a bit of a grubby feel to it thanks to the likes of people like Christopher Skase.

The startup landscape was so different then. For one, no one used the term 'startup' and there were no co-working spaces or endless blogs and podcasts about being an entrepreneur.

I saw a niche in the market that wasn't being serviced well and decided to fix that. Entrepreneurs, after all, are problem solvers. We see problems everywhere and we have the mind to come up with solutions. At the time, I didn't think that what I was doing was being an entrepreneur.

As my business started to grow, I extended my networks and joined more groups talking about entrepreneurship. I started to understand what made me different to people I had worked with in the past (as employees) and why I had found it hard to work for someone else!

I also started to notice the difference between how I thought and how my advisors thought. For example, I have never had any aversion to risk. This would make my finance advisors nervous, but I never had anything to start with so even as I started to build my assets I never worried too much about losing them.

I am probably not as gung-ho now as I was when I started out but certainly I am still much more comfortable with new ventures, risk and being out of my comfort zone than most people I know.

I think that alone is a difference about entrepreneurial thinkers. We aren't afraid to try things and fail. We also tend to back ourselves even if it means we are putting our security at risk. We are willing to put our houses on the line to solve the problem or achieve the goal and we don't quit.

How long did it take to get your HR Business off the ground and start seeing profits?

When I started **wattsnext**, I was on maternity leave with my first son, Digger. Before going on maternity leave, like most families, I set a budget for how long I could actually take off before having to return to work in some capacity. Financially, I had enough savings for nine months maternity leave and then it was back to work for me.

As I was preparing for leave there were some changes in the company I was working for. It was also announced that the CEO was leaving to pursue other business opportunities. We worked really well together and I respected him a lot so I was disappointed that he would not be there when I returned. I also knew that I wasn't the only one who felt a strong alignment to the CEO and it was highly likely that his exit would not be the only one to happen during the time I was away.

The idea for **wattsnext** had actually been brewing for some time as I had seen the need for a better HR service for SMEs. So, not long before my son arrived, I made the decision that I would not be returning from maternity leave. My plan was to be self-employed and covering my budget with my earnings from my own company within six months!

Once I had made the decision, I couldn't think of anything worse than having to return to work. Unfortunately, I had quite a traumatic birth with Digger and it took some time for me to recover, however, I never once doubted my decision.

I needed money within six months and it wasn't going to come from my past employer. This was all the motivation I needed and I got to work on loosely designing my product.

I want to highlight 'loosely' because I think it is really important when starting a business that we don't spend all of our time creating the perfect product and leave no time for marketing and sales! I knew

what I wanted to sell, I knew I could deliver what I sell, I just needed someone to buy from me and I would be off and running.

In those early days, my focus became all about networking. In between breastfeeding, I connected with as many small business owners as I could and started spruiking my services to anyone who would listen.

It didn't take long for me to pick up a client and I got to work on delivering my service. I kept the business very lean and focused on making sure I had enough money to cover my modest personal budget. Once I covered my expenses, I invested every extra cent into the business and I continued to do that for the next five years. I did not spend an extra dollar on myself or family other than the bare minimum we needed to live, for five years. This allowed me to expand my business as quickly as possible.

Those first years were particularly hard because I was working non-stop whilst raising a young family in a tiny house with no help. I remember dreaming about hiring a cleaner, buying a nice car, or even a new pair of shoes — anything to make me feel like all this work was for something.

Ultimately, all I wanted was to build a successful and sustainable business that would meet my vision. It was always a bigger play for me and I was prepared to wait. To this day, I believe the sacrifice that I made in those first five years is a key reason for the success of **watts**next.

It is also worth mentioning that on the day the business started I put a picture on my office wall of my dream car. Having grown up relatively poor compared to my friends, I had never had a nice car. I made a pact with myself that if the business was still alive and thriving on its fifth birthday, I would buy myself that car.

When the fifth birthday was coming around a couple of my key employees asked me when I was going to order the car. I hesitated

and said, “I don’t think I’m going to get it”. Having a nice car just didn’t feel real for me.

One of those team members turned to me and said, “You have had that picture by your desk for five years and through four office moves. You promised yourself if the business was alive and thriving on its fifth birthday you would buy it for yourself. You can now afford to get it, you deserve it.”

I was very moved to hear this from my employee. It meant so much to me to feel that support from her. But it was the next comment she made that sent me off to the car dealer. She said to me, “Plus, if you can’t get this car with all the work you have put in, what hope is there for the rest of us?”

I bought the car and loved every single day that I drove it, right up until I traded up!

In the beginning what skills were you lacking and how did you close the gap?

When I started my first business, I had nothing tangible in my business starter toolkit!

In fact, if I had spoken to anyone about my plans to start a business I am sure they would have thought I was crazy and strongly advised against it.

I had recently relocated to a new state and didn’t know anyone. I had only been working in Human Resources for five years, I had no qualifications after dropping out of university three times and I had no family around me. I was lacking in business experience, background and money. It was the start of the Global Financial Crisis and I had just welcomed my first son, who was three months old.

However, there were two things which were critical to getting me off the ground. The first was a vision. I had absolute clarity of what business I wanted to create, what our mission was, where it was going and what it was going to become. It was not a small, conservative or realistic vision. It was a 'take over the world' type of vision, but I was absolutely clear on exactly what I wanted to achieve.

The second helpful factor was a healthy dose of naivety! As the business has grown and my responsibilities have increased, being naive is not a strength or asset I recommend. However, at the beginning of my personal business journey it was a perfect ingredient for me.

I had no idea what was ahead and I absolutely believed in my ability to achieve my vision and to handle anything that would be thrown my way. I never once considered that all of those 'skills' I didn't have actually mattered. I never saw those 'weaknesses' as anything other than circumstances and I never let anybody knock my belief or my confidence.

I was naive to the importance of certain business skills and I strongly believe that because I didn't give this any energy it was never a limiting factor. All my lack of skills meant was that I needed to network more, read more, be more resourceful and work harder than my competition.

From this experience, I believe that having a 'lack of' something can be the greatest gift.

Were there times you wanted to give up? What got you through?

I really believe entrepreneurship and business ownership is not for everyone, and that's perfectly okay. However, it is the only thing I've ever wanted to do.

“ From this experience, I believe that having a 'lack of' something can be the greatest gift. ”

Having said that, just because I live and breathe business doesn't mean it has been easy. In fact, it has been the hardest journey of my life. While I love it on a macro level, there have been plenty of days when I most definitely wanted to give up.

I don't think there is anyone in any career who doesn't have moments where it's just all too hard. The difference between those who succeed and those who don't is not necessarily talent, skills, or luck. It is the ability to keep going when others would give up and to keep doing what needs to be done even when you don't feel like it.

This is why a clear and inspiring vision is critical. It is about mentally being able to think beyond the immediate pain and keep pushing forward.

There are lots of different strategies I use to get through the tough times, but ultimately it has been curiosity that has got me through when I have wanted to quit. I have always wanted to know if I can do it. I have always thought 'Imagine if I achieved the vision?' and 'I wonder what that would look and feel like if I reached my goal?'

I have just always wanted to know what I am capable of and that never ends. To that end, curiosity is my superpower!

What are the highlights of being in business for yourself?

The most amazing part of this journey has definitely been the people I have met and the experiences I've been able to have.

I am a big believer that you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with and for me it has been critical to surround myself with people who are where I want to be. This has meant I have really put myself out there. I have attended events where I feel completely out of my league, and asked people who I have on a 'business pedestal' to let me buy them a coffee so I can pick their brain.

As a result of this approach, I have met some incredible people doing incredible things and have learnt so much from them. I am humbled to say that many of those people who I looked up to (and was more than a little nervous to approach) are now some of my best friends.

Being an entrepreneur has also opened up many opportunities to have amazing experiences. Through being a board member of the Entrepreneurs Organisation, I have travelled to many countries meeting other business founders, visiting unicorn businesses and having once in a lifetime experiences.

I have challenged myself with extreme adventures, listened to high profile global speakers and toured the workplaces of some of the most well-known companies. This has all become possible because of my business and entrepreneurial journey and I am so incredibly grateful for the people I have met and experiences I have had.

What is one of the biggest lessons you have had in business?

Running a business has taught me to stick to my guns!

I had a really interesting experience a few years ago. One of the divisions of my business at the time had been given an opportunity to pitch for a big deal. We were all very excited because it was a large well-known, national company. We service the SME market, so we were all feeling very flattered and quickly jumped to work preparing for this pitch. Being a large company, they had given us a list of criteria of what and how we needed to present. It was different to what we were used to, so we put all hands on deck.

To cut a long story short, we put together an amazing pitch outlining why our offering was different to our competitors and why we were the best company to engage. We were very nervous when we pitched and although we walked out proud of ourselves, we had little expectation that our small company would be chosen over our large global competitors.

“ From a financial perspective this was a massive deal to walk away from. ”

We couldn't believe it when we received a call to say we had been chosen! They absolutely loved our approach and that we were so different to what they had ever seen before. I was so excited that the industry was starting to see that the way we did things was so much better for the client.

We pulled the team together and the champagne was flowing. We wanted to have a quick celebration before we worked out how we were going to actually service this client.

A few days later, we received the terms of engagement. These were standard terms relating to how this type of service would traditionally be delivered. However, this was not how we do things. I promptly organised to speak to the national manager to discuss the terms and arrange for them to be updated to align to our pitch and proposal (the one they loved and chose over the other boring competitors).

In that call they told me that I had to abide by their terms or the deal was off. I politely explained that the reason they chose us was because we don't work that way. We had a different approach that gives not only a better result for them but was also cheaper!

The response was, “We love you, but we only know the traditional way so please sign it and we can get started.”

I had no choice but to thank them for the offer and politely decline to work with them. The way they were asking me to work did not align with my company vision, mission or values and I knew I couldn't deliver something I didn't believe in.

From a financial perspective this was a massive deal to walk away from. It would have elevated our brand significantly and I could have doubled my team, but I would have lost all our integrity.

I pulled my team together and told them the story. The cheers were louder than the day we celebrated with champagne. We all felt amazing for choosing our values over the money.

I really believe that our business took a turn for the better that day. It was like everyone's heads were held a little higher, our backs a little straighter. We were proud of who we were and we believed in what we did. We got back to work doing what we specialised in for those clients who value what we have to contribute and we never looked back.

What is one of the most interesting things that has happened to you in your business career?

In 2015, I was lucky enough to attend a Leadership Gathering on Sir Richard Branson's Necker Island. This was five days of intense learning from some of the most inspiring people in the world. It also included enjoying the incredible surrounds of Necker Island, which was exactly what everyone would imagine — out of this world!

There were so many learnings to take away from this experience and I will never forget or underestimate just how wonderful it was. However, when people have asked me about it and I only have a few minutes to respond (I really need a full day to share the full extent of the experience as I am sure you can imagine), there were two things that have stuck with me.

1. The most inspiring people never stop learning. One of the key things I noticed about Richard Branson was that with every speaker we listened to, he was writing just as many notes as the rest of us. Even though he is one of the most accomplished business people and philanthropists in the world, he was also learning from everyone there. I am sure his humble nature, curiosity and thirst for learning have been key attributes to his success. This is something we can all learn from.

2. There were about 25 people on the island for this gathering. There were some very high-profile people from overseas in addition to Richard plus some pretty incredible Australians who are building amazing businesses. However, if you were dropped on the island in the middle of our gathering and did not know who anyone was, you would never have picked just how successful some of these people were. Why? Because amongst the millions of dollars of wealth, the famous connections, and extreme success, there were no egos! These people were doing what they do because they loved their work and genuinely want to make the world a better place. As a result, they have achieved financial success, but in no way did they stand out for this reason. This was a lesson I hold close to my heart everyday.

What do you think is an essential quality of an entrepreneur?

Being in business is all about continuous learning. If you don't like reading, listening to podcasts, attending conferences or picking other people's brains for experience then I would question your ability to achieve in business.

I am lucky enough to associate and speak with other entrepreneurs on a daily basis. One common thread between every successful person I have met is their commitment to personal development.

I have always invested time and money in coaches, courses, conferences, travel, books and podcasts. In addition to that, I have also had at least one mentor at any given time. I regularly take people out for coffee or dinner to learn from their experiences.

We all know that business is a tough road so the more people you can learn from the easier it will be. The great thing is that in this digital age discovering how to master new skills is easier than ever before.

I also think personal resilience is critical. I don't believe you can learn resilience from others, I think it needs to be learnt and the only way to do that is through experience.

To manage during the challenging times, investing in mental and physical health absolutely helps. Whether it be meditation, going to the gym, running, having a massage, visiting a health retreat or just taking the dog for a walk, all of these things help with clarity and stress management.

A lot of entrepreneurs struggle with letting go when it comes time to move on to other things. What are your top tips around this?

Having just recently stepped aside from the operational running of the business I founded, I understand first-hand how hard it is to let go.

Making the decision to pursue new and thrilling ventures was not hard. I am excited to experience the tech industry, to focus on scaling multiple startups and to have business partners for the first time. Designing websites, writing business plans, getting PR and learning a completely new space is extremely exciting and scary, but I love the idea of trying something new.

However, in order to take on the next challenge, the space needs to be created for that to happen. Letting go of having complete control of **wattsnext** did not come naturally for me. What made it even worse is that I thought I was ready to move on and that it would be easy. I received quite a shock when it wasn't.

I found myself to be very protective of what I had created and what I knew, making it very difficult for the new captain of the ship to start setting his own course. I also made it worse by feeling quite emotional about it. What was interesting is that I wanted this change, I had made it happen and yet I was the one who was having the most trouble adjusting to it!

“ In addition to that I have also had at least one mentor at any given time.”

I remember sitting in a board meeting where I no longer held the role of CEO and was there as Founder. I stepped over the invisible line of my new role multiple times, frustrating everyone including myself. Our Chairman suggested I actually get a hat that I wear every time I came to **watts** next to remind me of what role I now played. Luckily it didn't get to that, but I struggled for some time.

For anyone about to step aside or have less control of their business I would recommend doing the following:

1. Prepare to feel uncomfortable and out of place, even if moving aside was your idea.
2. Write yourself a Role Description or Outcome Profile. This will clarify what you have to do and more importantly the things that are no longer your job.
3. Try to take some extended leave at the beginning of the change, to allow the new CEO to find their feet without you looking over their shoulder. They won't sink the ship in three months (assuming you have recruited correctly) so let them have a go and then come back to answer questions and provide support. It will also be good for you to draw a line in the sand and take some time to detox from your business.

What do you say to people who think it is too late to get into business for themselves?

My response to people who believe it is too late to start their own business would be, "If you say so!"

I didn't start my first business until I was 30 and had a three month old baby. There were so many people who didn't believe in me. Many said it was too late and not a good time, but now at 41, with three children, I feel like I am just getting started and anything is possible!

I love Henry Ford's quote, 'Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you are right'.

We all know the story of Colonel Sanders. This man was a huge success, but he didn't even begin KFC's journey until he was into his forties. Being older can actually help as you have already lived and learnt.

If you are starting your business later in life, you have valuable life experience that those straight out of school don't. I used my naivety to start **watts**next. Now, I am using my life and business experience to start Scrappi, which is my new venture.

You are whatever age you are, you have whatever history and circumstances you have. The truth is, no one cares! Just go for it. Life is too long and too short not to try. Leverage what you have and go start that business!

Is there a significant quote or saying that you live your life by?

I have my favourite quote tattooed on my arm and look at it multiple times per day. It is '*no plan b*'

The full version is, 'If you want to take the island, you have to burn the boats. Amazing things happen when there is no plan b'.

I strongly believe that if we have a safety net or a backup plan we will take it when it gets hard. It's human nature. The pressure is on, things are feeling uncomfortable and if there is another option which is easier, we'll take it.

When striving for a big dream or massive goal, I think we should take away those safety nets, those boats, those plan bs and leave ourselves only one option. To succeed!

Without a backup, we must keep going, keep pushing, keep trying until we reach it, no matter how long or different the journey may end up being. It doesn't mean we don't have multiple strategies or tactics to get the result, it just means we don't give up on the ultimate goal when we are thrown a few challenges.

I think we need a Plan B much less that we think we do. We just need to believe and work our assess off a bit more. When I am feeling the pressure and wanting to quit, I look down at my wrist and keep pushing a bit harder. It's amazing how much further I can go!

What does success look like to you?

I think in business we tend to see success as revenue, profit, staff numbers. Many would-be entrepreneurs look forward to fancy offices and expensive material possessions.

This is because such things are easy to quantify. A profitable business is a successful business. Without money you cannot employ people or support the community so it has to be part of the equation.

In addition though, as an entrepreneur, success for me is being able to do the things I want to do. For me that is continuous learning, global travel, once in a lifetime experiences and building businesses that have a positive impact on my employees, my clients and the community.

If I can do all of that and inspire others to have no plan b and go and live the life they want, I would deem myself very successful!

QUALITY CULTURE



SEAN HERSEE

“ Challenges will arise every now and then. It’s your job to have the right attitude and mindset to work out how to push through and get past them. ”

Sean Hersee

SEAN HERSEE

Sean Hersee is the owner of Newcastle based company SAGE Painting.

The fifth generation of his family to take up painting, Sean soon realised his true goal was to become a successful entrepreneur. After mastering the tools of the trade from the ground up, Sean grew his one-man operation into a multimillion dollar business with over 20 employees.

SAGE Painting is now a team of brush-wielding experts who take pride in their appearance, their positive attitude and the top level quality of their work. The company has received numerous accolades, including winner of the Regional WorldSkills Awards, Master Builders Subcontractor of the Year and Small Business Champion Finalist. For Sean and the team, all these awards and trophies pale in comparison to the bright smiles and thank yous from happy homeowners.

Sean has successfully grown SAGE Painting by working at scale, introducing practical systems to his business and correctly managing cash flow. He has leveraged several marketing strategies both on and offline to generate a steady stream of new customers and repeat business.

Owning his own business has given Sean the flexibility to focus on his hobby of competing in triathlons. He has now taken part in events around the world, including the hardest challenge of all - the Ironman triathlon.

Thanks to the continued growth of SAGE Painting, Sean has been able to invest in property, growing his portfolio from one home to a multimillion dollar portfolio.

Together with his team, Sean's goal is for SAGE Painting to become the best known painting company in Australia. At this point in time the business is very much on its way.

Why did you start your business?

Starting my business was one of the biggest leaps I have ever made.

I had worked for my father's painting business for ten years, moving through the ranks of apprentice, tradesman and supervisor. With my father not planning to retire, I couldn't go any higher in the business.

I saved up money for tools and borrowed against my home to buy my first van. This step was necessary if I was to go on to establish a bright future on my own.

In the beginning, what skills were you lacking and how did you close the gap?

When I started, I lacked almost every skill you need to be an entrepreneur. I didn't know anything about sales, marketing, admin, leadership, project management or business development.

At 25, I had a painting trade and a 'doing whatever it takes' mindset. This meant educating myself along the way and learning from my mistakes.

I remember taking a four week small business course and hearing the words *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities* and *threats*. I didn't really understand what they meant at the time, but I knew self-education was going to get me to where I wanted to be. From that day on I looked for opportunities to help further my education in the areas I needed to be successful.

You have noted that you weren't very successful in the early years. Why was that the case?

The first few years was all about building for me. I grew my client base, built a reputation and built capital to reinvest back into the business. This was all with the goal in mind of achieving my vision of running a team of painters.

I didn't really know what it was like to run a business at this time. If you asked me what marketing was, I don't think I could have answered you.

How did you get onto the path for massive growth?

After I hired my first employee, I got the taste of delegation. The feeling you get when you don't have to do everything yourself is magical!

I took a micro-business course called Apprentice to Business Owner with a guy called Kel Thompson, who is still a mentor and great friend. He was doing a program called Business Blueprint and encouraged me to attend one of their events.

The Business Blueprint program showed me what was important to build a business.

Attending was definitely one of the best decisions I have made and marked the turning point of what was to be massive growth.

Once you made that shift in mindset, tell us about the growth that you experienced over the next three years?

Being the first painter in Newcastle to have social media accounts, websites and knowing what to do with them really helped our brand grow.

We always wanted to be perceived as higher quality painters so completing every job to the best of our ability and delivering the most value to our clients was what we had to do.

This alone wasn't going to be enough so we leveraged information from the Business Blueprint program to give us the edge on our branding. With good service, great value and strong branding we created the right mix. Over a three year period we have now grown the team to 23 fulltime painters.

In the early days when the growth started, did you find it hard to let go and trust other people?

Being a bit of a perfectionist and always getting complimented on how we delivered the best quality and service meant there were times when it was hard for me to let go.

When I first started delegating I was doing all the quoting so I knew what each client wanted. I was worried that once the quote was accepted and I handed the job over, the high standards I had set would decline.

What I realised was, although my team may never do what I want them to do all the time, there was no reason I couldn't build systems and processes for them to follow so they were doing what I asked most of the time.

I had to start looking at the company as ours, not mine. I sat down with the team and discussed what our purpose was and how we were going to deliver. We discussed clarifying everyone's roles and making sure we all knew where the business was headed.

Once I had the right strategies in place, great things started to happen and it made it easier to let go.

How did you go from working on the tools 70 hours a week to now no longer ever having to pick up a paintbrush?

After working on my own for a period of time, the time came to hire my first employee.

The stress of cash flow can be handled quite well being on your own. When you have the responsibility of another person to pay, it can be quite daunting. I decided to use my brother as the guinea pig.

Fortunately, things worked out and we were soon able to grab another painter to jump on board. I liked having the team to help get through the work. I realised that if I could make sure the numbers were right there was no reason why I couldn't continue to employ more people to get through all the enquiries. So on I went, taking on another four workers.

I was starting to get run off my feet, sorting the crew in the morning, painting during the day, quoting in the afternoons and doing paperwork at night. Something had to change. From there, I set a new plan to get off the tools and employ a couple more painters to cover my extra costs.

As you then started to work ON the business, what challenges did you experience and how did you overcome them?

I came across the following two stumbling blocks:

Culture — As the team grew, one of the challenges was the culture that was forming in the company.

Being in the construction industry, you can definitely attract a lot of different personalities. Finding the right mix of staff hasn't always been easy.

I believe there is a massive skills shortage in the construction industry. A lot of school leavers are told that if they don't go to university they will not be successful. This then puts a limit on the availability of new staff as we needed them.

We had to build a brand, not only for our new clients but to attract new staff. We had to be seen as the ideal place to work, not necessarily for the pay rates, but more so for the working conditions and the clean, safe workplaces. Once we had people contacting us to join the team it was easier to filter out the bad eggs.

Cash flow — I have heard the saying a lot that 'When you go to McDonalds, you pay for your food, and then you receive it!'. In the construction industry it is much different. You complete the work then you get paid.

This can make things quite tight sometimes. I have always been the type of person who treats people how I want to be treated. I would pay on time and then hoped people would pay me on time. As many business owners know, this does not always happen.

I have always insisted that my staff are paid first and I have never missed a payment, although there have been a few close calls. When we started to take on big jobs with some of the bigger builders, we could be doing 60 days work before we saw a cent. This would put our outlay into the six figures. Although I had never had an overdraft account, it was time to get one to have peace of mind that the bills would be paid if it came down to it.

Around this time, I also decided we needed a better payment system. We now ask for a deposit upfront and multiple payments throughout the bigger jobs to make sure the cash is in our bank sooner.

“ I have always been the type of person who treats people how I want to be treated. ”

What do you do to generate more leads and ensure your staff are always busy?

Our biggest leads come from referrals, but this is not something that can be relied on.

The first step was to have an awesome base to build growth from and this was our website. We were one of the first painting businesses in our area to have one, so this put us in a good position straight away. We then had to have a great social media presence to stay in people's minds, so when the decision came to paint their property, we were the first they called.

I can't mention each and every thing we do in terms of lead generation, but here are some of the important ones:

Having the best presence possible on Google has been something that has worked well for us. When we paint someone's home they may not need us back for a few years so it is important to always be attracting new clients.

The most common search is 'Painters Newcastle' on Google. We have strategies in place to make sure we have excellent reviews, our mapping is present and we are the first painting company to show in the organic search results.

Networking events is also something that has worked well for my business. I'm a big believer of doing what your competition isn't doing and going where your competition aren't going. In the early days I would join the local Master Builders Association and the local HIA and attend their networking events. By doing this I was able to build relationships with builders and other trades and then go on to do their work or be referred to do their clients' work.

One of the biggest returns on investment has come from sponsoring a local football team. It cost us \$10,000 to be on the front of the jersey and to be mentioned around the club and at every event they held.

It wasn't long before all the mums and dads from the club started to call us to paint their homes. The best connection we received was from one of the coaching staff. He worked for St Vincent De Paul and gave us the contract for all their buildings in the Newcastle area. Over the 12 months, we had returned over \$300,000 from our \$10,000 investment.

These are a few of the ways we bring in new customers. I also believe in always looking professional in any marketing. Neat uniforms and clear vehicle signage ensure you are always getting noticed, setting impressions and building your brand.



From a one-man band to a team of over 20, Sean has seen a lot of growth

What systems does your business use and why are they so important?

A wise man once told me, 'if you need to do something more than once, build a system'. Doing this has helped us scale the business quickly.

For us, systems are what I like to call problem-solvers. I certainly can't be there every time someone needs help to solve a problem, so we get the team to use our intranet to help solve the issue they have. If a solution is not there, we plan it out into a flow chart so it is there for next time.

Systems are important for us as we may have up to ten jobs running at any one time. We have systems for before, during and after each job to make sure everything is taken care of correctly.

As well as being important for business growth, systems can make a big difference when it comes time to franchise or to sell your business in the future.

How many systems do you have now and which parts of your business do you use them in?

We have over 120 systems at the moment with more coming into play as the business changes.

Simple systems such as, 'how to get more paint and materials to sites' make the business so much more productive when followed correctly. Important systems like, 'how to complete the payroll' make sure tasks get completed the same way, regardless of who is performing them.

We store all our systems through a program called Google Sites. This way our staff can access them whenever they need to.

You've also had to build your project management prowess. How did you develop these skills?

Project management was definitely a skill I learnt when working in my previous job as a supervisor. I would have a number of employees to oversee each day and I mastered this role over time.

For me, project management works really well when there is a good leader in charge to run the job and great communication between the staff. Having a skilled and motivated team makes a huge difference, as they know what needs to be achieved to get the best results.

How do you stay on top of everything if you're not in the office day-to-day?

Making sure we have the right people in the right roles is very important when it comes to me having less of a hands-on part to play within the business.

When hiring new staff, we look at past roles and often employ people who have previously run their own business. This is a skill set that has great potential for not needing to be micromanaged. We can set these team members up in a team of three (two tradesman painters and apprentice painter). They can follow our systems and procedures to complete the job with the desired results.

We have around eight teams with this structure who then answer to our operations manager. All enquiries and office admin tasks are taken care of by our office manager, who then books in quotes for our operations manager to complete in between other duties.

This structure means all the day-to-day stuff is getting done as required, which frees my time up to be working on the business. This involves attending training conferences and networking events, meeting our best clients, flying interstate to look at property or even doing charity bike rides overseas.

“ We have over 120 systems at the moment with more coming into play as the business changes. ”

I believe it's important to set your business model up to be similar to a franchise model even if that is not your main intention.

As your business has grown, what measures have you put in place to maintain your quality and standards?

Having your team know exactly what your vision and purpose are really sets in stone why we do what we do.

I have said to the team on many occasions that it's easy to be just another painting company doing the same average jobs for the same average people. We really need to set ourselves apart from the mainstream painting businesses out there.

To do this, we need to be as professional as possible. We have the team wear a very respectable uniform so they know they have an important role to do. This is a clear point of difference between us and our competitors.

We turn up in nice and tidy work cars with professional signage. Our systems also play a big part of this. There is even a 'Starting a new job' checklist, which consists of taking shoes off at the front door, making sure we are using nice clean drop sheets and bringing plastic to protect the client's belongings.

We want our team to be giving the 'wow' factor right through the job, and for this to happen they need to understand why we set such high standards. This benefits not only the company but the staff as well.

What is the most important thing you have learnt about succeeding in business?

To succeed in business, knowing where you want to go on your journey is very important.

Setting yourself realistic goals of what you want to achieve puts you on the right path. Working on small goals to reach the bigger goals gives you a continual sense of achievement and I believe this can give you a positive frame of mind for the next set of challenges.

Making sure you and your team have the right skills is also very important. There is a great saying; 'Hire slow, fire fast' and this is what my business aims for. We clearly map out what we want from each role before we hire new staff.

I also believe you need to take calculated risks. You need to live outside of your comfort zone to be able to grow. I would never have taken on my first employee or completed seven figure projects if it wasn't for taking a risk to grow the business.

Finally, you can't be scared to make a mistake. We learn from our mistakes and they make us stronger entrepreneurs.

Just don't make the same mistake twice!

What do you love most about life as an entrepreneur?

Having your own business means your income is only determined by how hard you work and how well you run your business. You can create your own business model and work your own hours. You are not restricted to a nine to five job or stuck with shifts that only suit the company you are working for.

I love how you can continually set yourself challenges and small goals and be able to achieve them before going on to set bigger and better challenges and goals. Whether you want to stay small and be a one man team or go on to have a multimillion dollar company or multiple businesses, it really is your decision how far you want your entrepreneurial journey to take you.

What do you think holds many people back from becoming successful entrepreneurs?

A lot of people never want to leave their comfort zone. It's human nature for the mind to tell you to be careful and give you warnings about what will happen if things don't work out.

I am guilty of this myself and I don't think those thoughts really go away. However, I have become more experienced and know how to work out if I am making the right decision.

One way to look at it is when most people learn to drive a manual car. Starting out, they continuously stall the car. Running a business can feel like this to someone just getting going. The way to finally pass that driving test is to try and try again. With practice, you can make fewer mistakes, build your confidence and start going that little bit faster!

This is also the case in business. You may not win on a few quotes or jobs at the start, but you are building experience, which will help you go on to have better success in the future.

We all know what happens with years of experience driving a manual car. You get to a stage when you are driving and don't even realise you have been changing the gears. In business, with years of experience, you can walk into a meeting or sales deal and everything will flow like clockwork.

If someone reading this is about to start a business from scratch, what would you recommend they do first?

Setting up the right foundations is the most important part to any business.

Mapping out your idea with a business plan is the best way to see how your business will work without having to start it straight away.

Creating a business plan can be really exciting. You get to work on things like your business name and location, products and/or services offered, your mission and vision statements.

Having these foundations done correctly really helps set you and your business up for great success in the future.

You've also now begun to invest in real estate. Why do you think it's important for business owners to focus also on investing?

When I was 23, I worked on a project for a Newcastle property investor and he told me, "You need to buy a house ASAP, like, next week".

At the time, I had just saved up enough money to go and travel Europe with my future wife so I told him it wasn't the right time. However, his advice to me was to focus on the things that make you money and let them work for you.

As a result, I decided to use a good chunk of my savings to purchase a house. We still left for our ten month overseas adventure, renting out the house while we were away. The investor was right, my home was now working for me.

Since then, I have used my business profits to reinvest back into property and let my income produce more income. As soon as we can gather enough for another deposit we are out there looking for the next best deal. Eventually, my wife and I will have a portfolio of homes providing enough passive income to support ourselves with hopefully an early retirement.

“ I’m a big believer in do what you do best and let others do what they do best. ”

What tips would you give a business owner who is looking to start investing in property?

Smart property investing requires a great team and an education from the right people.

On your team would be a wealth coach or financial advisor, an accountant and a mortgage broker. You could possibly use a buyers agent if you’re just starting out or if you prefer someone to do the heavy lifting for a fee.

A financial advisor or wealth coach who has experience in this area will help you plan the path you wish to take. I like to work with advisors who share a similar vision in property investing.

It’s also important your accountant is on board with property investing. Working with our accountant on our goals helps us to be purchase-ready when the time is right. We try to purchase one property a year and our accountant helps us know if the business is tracking well to get to our financial goals.

Our mortgage broker is someone we have a great relationship with. He is always looking for the best deals and making sure we are compliant with all the bank’s requirements.

Lastly, we have worked with a buyers agent in the past to do the property searching for us. I’m a big believer in do what you do best and let others do what they do best. We pay a small fee for the buyer’s agent, but it always outweighs the risk of purchasing property in the wrong area and losing money down the track.

What's next for your business? How are you going to take things even further?

We almost have the business in a position where we think it is manageable from a distance. From here, my wife and I can look at starting a new adventure.

As the business is based on a franchise model, we are starting to explore options of setting up in other areas where we believe the same success can be repeated. If we can make the business work successfully an hour away from home, we'll look into making it work three hours away from home and beyond.

We have also explored the option of starting businesses in other trades such as electrical, plumbing and cleaning using a similar model to what we already have. This would keep us local and leverage the brand we have already built.

As part of giving back to the community, I would also love to invest in other people's businesses. This could involve working with startups, buying businesses that need saving or just helping mediocre businesses to become outstanding.

Having a young family, what does the flexibility of having your own successful business mean to you?

Now the business is in a position to give me more time, I can be flexible with how I spend my days.

My son is only 18-months-old, but I have the chance to be there as he is growing up. I don't have to miss those special moments like his first words or first steps.

Having my own business allows my wife to work the hours she prefers in her own job. It also makes a big difference when we decide to pack up the car or jump on a plane to go for a quick getaway.

What other interests or hobbies are you flexible to do with your extra time?

Once I started to gain extra time and I felt I needed a quick break from business, I bought a quality road bike to indulge my passion for riding.

This soon lead to setting a goal of completing a triathlon. It was a small race, but I managed to win. I soon developed a bug for tackling longer and more challenging triathlons.

After completing a number of events, I set my eyes on the biggest of all races in the sport which is a full Ironman triathlon. This consists of a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and a 42km marathon.

Preparing for this kind of event requires over 20 hours a week so having flexible work hours meant I could train at the times which were convenient for me. In 2016, I went on to complete my first Ironman in a time of 12 hours and 3 mins.

Looking back, would you change anything about your business journey and if so, what?

It's very easy to say I would have done things differently if I had my time over, but then I wouldn't be where I am today.

What I would change is the speed of implementation. I would also make sure I made changes in the business as soon as I learnt them. I think implementing what you learn from business conferences, books or from networking colleagues should happen ASAP to change the business path for the better. This can save a lot of time and money.

Setting the bar high early is also something I recommend. In the early days, I don't think I gave myself the credit for where I could actually go in a small amount of time. The goals I set were great to achieve, but I think if I had pushed myself that bit further I could have seen the results much more quickly.

Is there a significant quote which you live your life by?

I remember reading a quote by Henry Ford that said, 'When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it'.

This has really stuck by me throughout my business journey. There were times at the start when I doubted myself. I would think back to this quote and tell myself that if I can just push through a bit of pain, the ride will get better.

Ford's quote also helps when new challenges arise. I think to myself, 'Okay, now we are hitting a bit of turbulence, what is the best path to take to make sure we get back on track?'.

Challenges will arise every now and then. It's your job to have the right attitude and mindset to work out how to push through and get past them.

POSITIVE IMPACT



TINA TOWER

“ I realised that whenever you master a set of problems in your business, the universe recognises what a good problem solver you are and rewards you by giving you a new set to deal with! ”

Tina Tower

TINA TOWER

Begin Bright founder, Tina Tower, has captured attention with her raw and real approach to building a business. Born in Sydney in 1984, this dynamic self-starter sees herself as an example of what happens when you define what you want in life and go after it with all you've got.

Like some people find religion, Tina found personal development at an early age. This led her to begin investing in property at 18 and start her first business at 20.

After graduating from the University of Sydney with teaching qualifications, Tina launched her first toy store and tutoring centre in 2004, designing and licensing her own programs and curriculums. This business evolved into school-readiness and primary tutoring centre, Begin Bright, in 2008. After initially licensing her early learning program to other teachers, the turning point came for Tina when she launched Begin Bright as a franchise in 2011. The network grew to 30 centres around Australia before being acquired by Cognition Education, in 2016.

Tina has been celebrated in the Australian business community, winning the Australian Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year in 2014 and being named 2017 Entrepreneur in Residence for Australia's largest business women's group, Business Chicks. She was named My Business Magazine 'Woman in Business' and 'Overall business' winner in 2012 and won the Australian Small Business Champions Award for Educational Services in 2013. Tina and Begin Bright have been featured regularly on *Sky Business*, *The Huffington Post* and *The Financial Review*.

Now concentrating on new challenges, Tina works remotely while travelling the world with her husband and two sons. Ever the entrepreneur, she runs multiple businesses and coaches others to do the same as a High Performance Business Coach through her Scale Up program.

What was your very first business venture and what did you learn from it?

I have come full circle with my business journey.

I started my first business, Reach Education Centre, when I was 20 and in my second year of studying at university. It was never meant to be anything huge, I just felt this need to do it. Originally, the concept involved an educational toy store, a birthday party venue and a tutoring centre. Over 13 years it evolved into Begin Bright, which licensed curriculum throughout the country, then into a full tutoring centre franchise. I built 33 centres nationally before selling the company in 2016.

The short answer to 'What did I learn from it?' is, 'Everything!'

When a business is first started, especially when you don't have loads of capital behind you, as an owner, you learn to do everything. It is such an intense period but a valuable one. When I sold my business, I sat down and wrote out 200 lessons that I had learned.

For me, the main lesson is to surround yourself with great people. As soon as I could afford it I invested in people. This made the whole business better because we then had more diverse minds and more people to get things done and scale.

I would always hear of people with a PA and roll my eyes. Then I got one and that woman made my life thousands of times better! Not only was she the absolute best at her job and technically brilliant, but she was the 'yin' to my 'yang' and just made the world a much more enjoyable place. This enabled me to be so much better at my job.

Another lesson is that it's hard. I think we can fall into the trap when things get tough of thinking we're a failure, but it is just as hard for every other business owner. What you need to do is learn to deal with the stress so that you can keep things fun and not burn out.

“ The truth is they could get fired next week or the business could go under. ”

I used to think in the early days that once I solved the next problem, it would be smooth sailing from there. It wasn't long before I realised that whenever you master a set of problems in your business, the universe recognises what a good problem solver you are and rewards you by giving you a new set to deal with!

Once I learnt to respond better and not to react to everything, I realised I actually loved the whole process. Playing it safe and having no risk, to me, just isn't living. I would rather try really hard to achieve my dreams and make an impact on the world and know that by doing that, it's inevitable that I am going to fall down so many times.

The best part about falling down again and again is that you learn to have 100 per cent certainty within yourself.

What do you love most about being an entrepreneur?

Everything! I feel so lucky that I found entrepreneurial life at such a young age and have got to live a life less ordinary. Sure, the risk and responsibility of your own business is huge, but to me, it beats the alternative.

I've heard people who want to start their own business say that they don't want to leave the 'security' of their job. The truth is they could get fired next week or the business could go under.

As your own boss, you are in charge of your destiny. You get to have a dream and imagine something, create it, see it in reality and make a positive impact on the world. It doesn't get much better than that.

Where did the inspiration come from to start Begin Bright?

When I started my first tutoring centre, most of the children who would come in had been struggling at school for a couple of years and their self-confidence was incredibly low. For the first few weeks of tutoring, we would have to focus on their negative self-talk and change their initial response to everything.

I was with one particular student one day who was a tough looking eight year old boy. He was crying in the lesson because he said he was such a bad learner and just didn't get it. He felt like as soon as school started everything had moved so fast and he had never been able to keep up.

That night, while trying to work out what to do for him, I came up with the idea of school-readiness classes. They weren't really a done thing, but my idea was to have children in the two years before they start school, to come in for a one hour a week lesson of literacy, numeracy and handwriting. The idea of it wasn't to make them academically advanced but to develop positive attitudes towards learning. That way, when they did start school and they encountered a problem they didn't know, they had faith in their ability to work it out because they knew they were a good learner.

After developing the curriculum, I ran it in our own tutoring centres, then started licensing it around the country before franchising the full business model.

How did you get your first customers to get your business off the ground?

With every business, the start is like crickets. You set it up and it's all perfect and you're all excited and then no one comes.

“ Opening our first franchise was definitely a high point. ”

inviting them in for a trial class. It didn't take long before word-of-mouth started spreading.

The old saying of 'build it and they will come' is bullshit. You need to go and get your customers, like physically go and get them. I would walk the streets surrounding our centre with helium balloons, talking to people and learning about their children before

As an entrepreneur, start marketing and talking about your business and don't ever stop.

What have been some of your main highlights during your career?

Opening our first franchise was definitely a high point.

Our annual franchisee conference was always my favourite time. I would get to see my team and the franchisees stand up and share lessons that had helped them thrive.

Winning the Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year award was so poignant. It had been an award I'd looked up to for ten years and it was mind blowing to think that I had made it that far.

There are also those little team moments where you're dancing and everything is going well and flowing. Not necessarily huge moments but definitely a highlight.

Selling my company was a highlight but also one of the hardest things because I had to say goodbye to so many people and a life I loved, marking the end of an era.



A proud moment winning the Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year award

Why did you franchise your business?

Ultimately, I wanted to reach more children. I felt like I couldn't do enough on my own and I knew that franchising was a good way to scale a service-based business.

Our business is based on serving families and is really dependent on the quality of each interaction. I thought that if I had too many company locations run by managers who didn't have anything invested, the quality would slip.

Under a franchising model, each franchisee is an owner in their business. They're personally and financially invested so they have the same level of love and care as I do.

“ The cost of compliance is really high so you become pretty good mates with your lawyer. ”

I started out licensing Begin Bright for a couple of years, but people wanted the whole package of curriculum, business advice, name, systems and set up. Scaling the business through franchising was the perfect solution.

Having been through it, what do you think are the pros and cons of franchising?

Franchising is like nothing I've ever experienced or seen elsewhere in the business world. It's a unique beast.

The pros are obviously that you've got scalability in a way that doesn't require as much capital investment as opening ten new offices or stores yourself. For me, it's awesome to see something that started with an idea becoming this massive thing in locations across the world.

The company has a positive impact on the happiness levels of children but also for our franchisees. I have loved seeing people who thought of themselves as 'just a teacher' get this surge of empowerment when they have backed themselves to start their own businesses.

The cons of franchising are mainly around the human side. People are really clear about what they want in their business and what they want from their franchisor, but that's not the same for each person. As a franchisor, you have to cater for the masses and the brand. Unfortunately, you're always going to piss some people off.

Franchising is also very litigious and systemised. The cost of compliance is really high so you become pretty good mates with your lawyer. As an entrepreneur, I also found it quite difficult to have everything so consistent and lose a little bit of the playfulness and experimentation that I love so much about running my own business.

Do you have to be a certain size in order to franchise a business? And how do you prepare?

If you are looking to expand into a franchise, you need to be proven and solid on your business model. There is so much less flexibility once you start franchising so you can't be as liquid as you're used to when you're running a traditional business.

My best advice if you're wanting to franchise your business is talk to as many people as you can who have already been through the process. When I was starting out, I rang every franchisor who I could get contact details for and spoke to franchisees of about 20 different companies to find out what they liked, what they didn't like, what was going well and not well. This feedback helped me design our franchise model.

Before launching, you need to have all of your branding, systems, training and people in place. Once you start, it will take off like a rocket and from there you can build on what you've got as you grow and evolve.

Franchisees are looking to you for all of the answers, so be prepared and ready to answer them confidently.

Some say franchising can be quite an expensive process. What is a fair price range?

Franchising can definitely be costly in the beginning. The amount you spend will depend mainly on how much you're willing to do yourself and how much you're going to pay people to complete tasks and processes for you.

As with most industries, there are people who take advantage of you when you're starting out. A lot of franchise consultants will charge around \$60,000 to put together your operations and training manuals,

but as the franchisor all of that information is coming from you so you're essentially paying a lot for a format and framework.

With technology being so brilliant and readily available, it is possible to find what you need online and put it together. You can also get a coach who specialises in franchising to support you, which will be a lot cheaper.

There are some great books that can really help the setup process. Funnily enough, *Franchising for Dummies* was one of the most informative I read.

Another person you will need is a lawyer. They will get you set up with agreements, trademarks and compliance. This will cost around \$20,000.

A big expense when you are starting the franchise process is marketing and people. You need people to be able to support franchisees but you're not getting in much royalty revenue while people are in startup mode so you bleed money in the first couple of years.

I'd say to someone wanting to franchise to either have a big chunk of cash set aside or a good steady profit flow from company owned operations to pay for the franchising until it builds.

Were there any times that you wanted to give up? What got you through?

Of course! Gosh, hasn't everyone?

Seriously, there is no good logic as to why someone would want to be an entrepreneur. It's filled with pressure, responsibility, risk and often at the beginning you're getting paid way less than what you would with a job. But the magic of it is so attractive.

There's always self-doubt that creeps in when you're getting out of your comfort zone or pushing to the next level. You get knocked down again and again and it makes you wonder whether or not you should continue.

The time I wanted to give up was a year into my franchise journey. I had run my first franchise conference and I'd given absolutely everything I had. I had spent the first year pumping money continually back into the business, working 50-60 hour weeks with my children aged two and three by my side.

At the conference, I had a franchisee stand up and rip into me. I was there thinking, 'If I've done everything and she's still dissatisfied, am I ever going to make her happy?'.

This was actually an incredibly vital lesson in not being able to please everyone. By knowing I was following my values and that I was doing the best I could, I only had to answer to myself.

Sometimes though, your biggest critic can be the best thing. They teach you so much about yourself and your conviction.

After that conference, I got really clear on what I was about and what the business was about. I decided what I would tolerate and how I would operate as a leader, and the business thrived as a result.

What did you need to do to prepare your business for sale?

The sale process for a business depends on how big the business is. I have sold smaller businesses and I found that really good record keeping and documented systems meant they were ready to be passed onto a new owner.

When it came time to sell Begin Bright there was a lot of preparation involved. Because of franchising, our record keeping and documentation was already really clean and easy to transfer over. The difficulty was

that there were a lot of moving parts. I was ultimately the face of Begin Bright because of all of the PR I'd had so that was the hardest thing to remove myself from.

I think every business should be run as if you were one day preparing for exit because you never know what the future holds. The things you should do to set yourself up for this include:

- Having meticulously organised files
- Creating extensive systems for operations
- Keeping business plans and cash flow projections up to date
- Having the right people in place
- Always researching future opportunities and directions for the business

How did you find your buyer and how did you negotiate the price?

When the time came to sell Begin Bright, I used a business broker to find the buyer. There were three offers after the first month, which I was really happy with. To determine the price, we worked on the IP value and a profit multiple.

I sold my business under an earn out structure, which I wouldn't do again unless I had very strict terms. For my next business sale I would take a lower sale price and exit the business in a shorter transition time.

All these decisions depend on the individual selling, what they want and how the purchasing company will treat the founder.

My biggest advice when selling would be to look at every option as unemotionally as you can, which is nearly impossible when you're

selling a business that you built from the ground up, but really try. Imagine the best case and worst case scenario of every deal and then make the best decision you can with the information you have at the time. You'll never regret it because you did the best you could.

How did selling change your life and do you have any regrets?

I sold the business because I didn't really want to be head of a franchise, but once the deal was done, I didn't know what to do with my time!

It was a huge adjustment. I went from being all over every detail and in all of the action, to then being an employee on an earn out and then just disappearing. It's a strange thing, as is all major change but I'm really looking forward to the next chapter of life and what that will bring after having such a rich experience as a business owner.

When I finally exited the business 19 months after sale, I went up into a treehouse on my own for a week to decompress. I wanted a chance to process everything that had happened and wonder what I was going to do next.

I loved the break and absolutely needed it as a way to recover and reflect. Towards the end of my business, I had fatigue and was getting quite a bit of anxiety after operating on adrenaline for such a long time.

For someone who is used to achieving a lot in a day, it's amazing how restorative 24 hours out of life can feel, let alone a week. I would recommend it to anyone and everyone to do once a year to recalibrate and check in to make sure you're living life on your terms and assess whether you need to make any changes.

“ I loved the break and absolutely needed it as a way to recover and reflect. ”

After selling, was there a temptation for you to sit back and relax and not jump into something else?

After I sold the company in July 2016, I was on an earn out so was technically a full-time employee for the first time in my life, which went exactly as you'd imagine it would go for any entrepreneur!

Because I was used to working long days, I kept up other business interests after hours to keep myself stimulated and start setting up the next thing.

My wellness coach told me a couple of years ago that I needed to spend more time on my hobbies and asked what they were. I had a little giggle. I spend my time with my husband, my children and business. I do walk on the beach every morning and catch up with my wonderful girlfriends every chance I can get (which is never often enough), but I have no desire to stop working. I love what I get to do and I see it as a hobby that makes me happy.

In saying that, I won't be setting out to build a business that large again straight away. I'm going to give myself a couple of years to do what's fun and feels good. I will take the time to enjoy my family and travel for a while before getting too serious again, if ever!

What other advice do you have for fellow entrepreneurs looking to scale their businesses?

First and foremost, get yourself out of the way. Even when you're just starting, you can start creating systems to ease the processes in your business. This will help things to run smoother and you will be able to do more in less time with less energy output.

In order to scale, systems are essential. I always used to get confused when I would hear of a business failing because they grew too fast. I thought growing meant more money and then you couldn't fail.

The truth is a business will fall down if it grows too fast, if you don't have the right systems and people in place. If you've got a solid foundation and are ready to level up, start thinking about how your business could thrive without you being involved in the day-to-day and work on implementing those strategies.

I really think a business is very different when run by a founder because it has that real heart-centred, values-based feel to it. My advice to business owners is to stay in that leadership position, steer the ship and focus on looking after your team and direction.

The founders of the most successful companies I have seen, have shifted focus to the team. When that's done well, the team takes care of the rest of the business perfectly.

So much of people's lives is spent at work. It is our responsibility as business owners to create great environments for people where they feel like they belong and can contribute positively to the company and the world. When people are having fun at work and they get into flow, that permeates throughout the whole company and you'll scale far quicker.

Put more brashly, have a 'no assholes' policy and you'll be light years ahead.

Although you need solid business fundamentals, when a well-performing business starts to stall or drop, it usually has to do with people and culture issues, rather than strategy.

What's the worst piece of business advice you've received?

Focus on doing one thing really well, don't try to do multiple things at once. I think this could work for some people, but not at all for me.

“ I have always run my life on a ten year plan, broken into one year plans. ”

That's the thing with all business advice though, what's right for you is going to be completely different for someone else. The advice could be 'work harder and faster', but if you're already pulling massive days and fuelling yourself on adrenaline, that's the opposite of what you need to do or you're going to burn out.

Whenever you hear business advice, let it sit for a bit. Ask yourself if it's true for you and if it will help you where you're at right now in your stage of business. You will know what to do.

What advice would you give to entrepreneurs in their first three years of starting a business?

Running a business is hard as hell but if you do the right thing, you will get there and it will all be worth it.

Also ... just relax! You will get that sale, you will get that house, that holiday or whatever it is you're dreaming of and planning for. If you're committed, passionate and strategic, the world is yours.

Good things take time. One day, you will wake up and realise that everything you dreamed of and planned for has come to you. I wish I knew that in the beginning.

What do you think are the essential qualities or attributes of successful entrepreneurs?

A successful entrepreneur is able to creatively persist. When something doesn't work out, you need to be able to view it pragmatically, sit down and work out how you're going to try another way.

You know the saying, 'If one door closes, open another door. If the doors are all locked, break through the f*#cking window'.

The failure rates of businesses are so high and I think that's because everyone, absolutely everyone, harbours self-doubt and feelings that they're not enough. When something doesn't work out, it's almost proof of that expectation we secretly held. A successful entrepreneur can see it for what it is, draw out the lessons and try again.

What are some of your future plans or goals (personal or business) for the next five to ten years?

Planning is a big part of my life. I started getting into personal development as a teenager. Since then, I have always run my life on a ten year plan, broken into one year plans. These yearly plans were divided into 90-day action steps and separated into weekly goals, then daily tasks.

At the height of my business growth, I even had the days broken into fifteen-minute increments. I would allocate tasks weekly to this schedule because it was the only way I could, at the time, avoid overwhelm and get everything done.

That being said, this is a sure-fire way to burn out if you do it for too long. It's one of those frog in the boiling pot things, the temperature gets turned up so gradually that you don't realise you're burning until it's too late.

I've very much learnt now that life is a marathon and while it's totally fine, even necessary, to sprint at certain intervals, you can't give 100 per cent for the whole thing.

Now I've sold my company, I am looking forward to a couple of years of not being so hyper-planned and just seeing where the world takes me. I'm loving helping people with business coaching and speaking

and starting to play with some smaller businesses to do essentially that, play.

I have been able to spend a lot of time with my children (currently aged eight and nine) because of having my own business. It is still not nearly enough so we're heading off on a year of travel around the world. I have always said that I can work from anywhere so this will be a great experiment and test of that as I continue to build my other businesses, do my coaching, homeschool the kids and explore the wonders of the world!

Tell us about the new business that you started and where it's going?

Because I've been doing the one thing for such a long time, I'm really looking forward to having a play for a while and just seeing where the world takes me. Franchising was super serious and filled with systems, compliance and consistency, which is not what I love about business so I'm excited about having the freedom to experiment with new ideas.

For me, business is all about imagining something that will help the world, creating it and growing it and yourself. I'm enjoying helping other people to do this through my speaking and coaching company. It's great to be able to share what I've learnt and experienced over the last 14 years in business with others who are on their way to achieving their own dreams. I've created an online program, Scale Up, to help people scale their business. It's so much fun watching people progress through and really step into the light and shine.

If anything, I am more excited to see my coaching clients succeed than about any success I've experienced. When I've had great success, I always internally can't help but think about the ways that I fell short and how much further I wish I'd gone.

When my clients achieve something amazing, I see it for what it is. I see them achieve things they'd only dreamed of and have worked so hard to create, and being a part of that is fantastic.

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DON'T DO IT ALL



SHARON WITT

“ I personally love to encourage and cheer people on, even those in the same field as me. This is a positive thing to do and it really does come back to you tenfold. ”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Witt'.

SHARON WITT

Born in 1970, Sharon Witt was raised in the beautiful Yarra Valley in the outskirts of Melbourne, Australia. Ever the social butterfly who thrived in the school environment, it is no surprise she went on to become a school teacher.

At age 12, Sharon declared she would return to her high school as a teacher one day. Always a girl of her word, this is exactly what Sharon did. After qualifying as a teacher, she headed straight back to the school she attended all those years prior.

15 years later, Sharon wrote her first book series for teenagers. *Teen Talk* began as a way of helping young people navigate the many issues that come with growing up and developing resilience.

This series served as a launching pad for an entirely new career as a best-selling author.

Sharon's books have now been published in multiple countries and translated into several languages. Sharon is a sought-after media commentator on teen issues, appearing regularly on television and radio programs.

Since launching her company, Sharon has gone on to write and publish a further 12 books, including the best-selling *Girlwise* and *Wiseguys* series. In addition, she has created numerous educational programs for schools and now mentors others who have a passion to share something of value with the world.

Sharon's most recent venture has been launching a highly successful parenting and education conference, which she has taken around Australia. She still teaches two days a week, spending the rest of her time writing for publications, taking part in media interviews and presenting at conferences and events.

Sharon is passionate about growing her business and continuing to find innovative ways to educate parents and young people.

What inspired you to leave the safety and security of your job to start a part-time business?

I had been in my current employment, as a secondary teacher for over 15 years, and just had this burning desire to write a book for teenagers. It wasn't even a thought to begin a new business.

I had no desire to step out and launch a successful company. I wrote and published one book, which led to more books, which led to the business expanding, innovating and becoming beyond anything I could have imagined at the beginning.

What advice do you have for people who are too afraid to step into their new business idea because they feel they don't have the skills required?

I honestly believe that if you have a passion for something and there is a need for what you are creating or offering, you can develop it into an incredible business.

I would suggest right from the beginning that you find at least one great mentor who can walk the journey with you and offer advice along the way.

In my opinion, self-belief is a huge aspect of your journey to success. You need to have incredible self-belief in what you are doing before others will get on board and support you.

I believe you can always learn new skills along the way. There are many people out there who will be all too happy to help and teach you along the way. Anything that is too difficult for you to take on or learn can be passed on to someone else to do for you.

Finally, you are never, ever, too young or too old to create something new. Don't live with regrets. Just start!

How did you overcome your fears about making decisions?

I had fears from the beginning, no doubt. I was always a play it safe type of person, certainly not a risk taker. Yet writing and publishing my first book — which was the first step in the new business was quite an expense to begin with.

I took a calculated risk in publishing my first book. Fortunately, it paid off and I went on to launch an entire series. I believe the more you do your due diligence and take calculated risks, the more confident you become in taking those risks.

Ten years after publishing that initial book, I am quite adept at making decisions and have learnt to trust my instincts.

How do you know if you've got a good business idea and it's worth pursuing?

Are you passionate about your idea? Does it keep you up at night and wake you up early in the morning? If you cannot stop dreaming and brainstorming about this idea then you are probably on to something.

However, it also has to be something that your market wants and needs. So I would encourage a start-up to test the market. Get out there and ask people what they need and if they will buy what you are creating.

What's the most common mistake new business owners make?

Often, business owners believe they have to set themselves up with everything first!

I've seen businesses rent an office and purchase all the latest high tech equipment to look the part. You can spend thousands of unnecessary

dollars, but in actual fact you don't need a great deal of resources to make a start on your entrepreneurial journey.

Even today, my office is a variety of cafes where I write, work and run my company.

What do you think makes a successful entrepreneur?

Being in charge of a successful business requires loads of energy and time. That being said, this shouldn't discourage anyone from getting out there and giving it a go. I also believe an essential quality of an entrepreneur is the ability to delegate!

Pass the tasks and skills you know you don't possess on to others and stick to the things that you are passionate about in your business, such as the ideas, creativeness, goal setting and future planning.

How important have mentors been in helping you get to where you are today?

Mentors have played a significant role in the development and expansion of my company, particularly with the book publishing side of my business. I have a wonderful mentor who works in this industry and his input and ideas have been pivotal in the growth and expansion of my book series.

I have also been fortunate to have a few other business mentors come into my life who have contributed significantly to the growth of my business. These people have encouraged me often to step out of my comfort zone and challenged me to think more broadly. They have suggested opportunities such as sponsorship deals that I would

“ Even today, my office is a variety of cafes where I write, work and run my company. ”

not have thought of, and I have been able to call on them for advice when I needed it.

I would also add, once you are achieving a measure of success in your own journey, it is important to give back in some way by mentoring others when possible.

When do you think is the right time to quit your job altogether?

This can be a really tough decision to make and there is no simple answer, particularly if, like me, you actually love your day job and receive great satisfaction from it.

I believe there comes a time when your intuition will tell you it's time to make the break. Certainly you need to be able to support yourself financially, and I would suggest you have 12 months worth of income secured as a backup.

If you have been in your job for ten years or more, you may consider taking your long service leave to focus entirely on your business to see how it goes.

Another useful suggestion was given to me by my parents, and that was, to live and work 'as if' for one year. This means you actually keep working in your day job and save all or most of this income into a savings account. If you find after nine months or longer that you have been able to survive financially with the income from your side business alone, you will have a strong indication of whether it is feasible to go out on your own. In addition, you'll have back up savings to keep you going.

No one can actually make the decision for you as to when to quit your day job. In my situation, I had an incredible boss who really supported me along the way with my side business. I have been able to reduce

my work days over the last few years to enable me to dedicate more time and energy to the growth of my business.

What is a common misconception about succeeding in business?

For me, the most important thing I have realised is that I don't have to be multi-skilled in order to achieve success.

I have learnt the value of a TEAM! I hire those who are the best at what they do. For example, I couldn't think of anything worse, but my website girl just loves the creativity of designing new campaigns, advertisements and images.

The same goes for managing my emails and the details of all my speaking events. I hire a wonderful person who just loves to manage those elements. I would prefer to concentrate on writing and presenting.

How do you manage it all?

I get asked this question almost daily. The answer is, quite frankly, I don't do it all.

I'm fairly certain that I thought I was superwoman in the beginning and tried to manage finance, communications, marketing and admin on my own. You can only try and do it all for a short space of time before you run yourself into the ground.

To make things easier and more efficient, I hire those who are the best at what they do, or are passionate about what they do. For example, I have an amazing PA and I just couldn't do what I do without her.

I also employ the most wonderful Event Manager, whose passion is managing every aspect of planning and running the best conferences.

She is highly detail-focused and takes all of the stress off me so I can focus on the things that I do best, which is presenting, developing relationships and liaising with communities of parents and educators.

How have you been able to get quality media exposure?

I have been incredibly lucky to have had a great deal of free media exposure over the past ten years. This has added untold value to my business and created thousands of sales.

Initially, I gained media interest with the launch of my very first book. I was invited to appear as a guest on a few national morning shows, which got my foot in the door.

I was able to form relationships with a few producers and went from there. With television in particular, producers rely on 'talent' to contribute to their programs. I learnt fairly early on in the process that although you may be lucky and be on the radar of a producer and have them call you, many of them are so busy that they actually respond better if you drive the content and suggest segment ideas.

This is not for the faint-hearted and takes time and work! It involves keeping up with the latest news, breaking stories and looking for an angle or a 'hook' as they refer to it in the media. A hook is an idea, a story, that would be of interest to a potential audience and would prompt discussion and comments. It takes practice and a great deal of patience to become a regular media commentator as segment producers receive hundreds of emails on a daily basis.

However, if you are 'good talent', in that you can drive a segment, know your topic well and can deliver with confidence, you are more than likely to be asked back again and again.

With radio, it has been a little easier. Many programs, particularly smaller radio stations and community radio, love to have easy access

to content. I have been able to gain regular radio commitments over the past ten years simply by being available and able to submit topic ideas quickly. The beauty of radio is that you simply need access to a phone to be able to contribute.

Print and online media is also a great opportunity to get your name and brand some great exposure. Think about articles you could write and send to editors as a way of establishing yourself as an expert in your field. Many publications reply on the contributions of business owners who can submit content in exchange for exposure.

A word about media exposure — it is worth its weight in gold when you are lucky enough to secure it. However, most media exposure is unpaid. If you approach it correctly, the result should be higher sales and more credibility.

For me, personally, media exposure has provided tens of thousands of dollars in free advertising that has reached hundreds of thousands of potential customers.

What other marketing strategies have you used to spread the word about your products?

I really believe that social media has changed the landscape for many businesses in that you can now target and reach out to your demographic.

As for my business, which began as writing and publishing self-help books for teenagers and then for the younger children, my market was predominately parents of children and teens. I started by sharing graphics and details about my books on my Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts. I found that the more I engaged with my followers, the more word-of-mouth spread about my products.

“ You cannot assume that people will just randomly find out about your product or service. ”

For some of my published titles, I have engaged a PR professional to test and measure the success of this process. With this, I gained some excellent television coverage in peak times that parents, especially mums, would be watching. Print media campaigns where I provided giveaways of my products to readers also were relatively successful.

People love a good deal! A few times a year I produce an offer on my books that is almost too good to refuse. This creates a lot of buzz and many people share the special with their friends and followers. I have found some great sales success through this and use mostly social media to promote this.

Finally, writing articles or making comments for a variety of print and online publications is often worth it for me as most publications will run the article with a link to my website or an image of my book.

In recent years, I have launched a major conference for parents, educators and anyone working with children and teens. This has achieved immeasurable success, however, I really just tested and measured a variety of marketing ideas, with some literally just popping into my head.

For example, I wanted to reach as many parents living in a particular city and closest to the venue. So I identified schools in that area and personally sent a letter to the principal of the school, along with a few hundred flyers advertising the conference.

In this letter, I explained to the principal the huge benefit for both parents and educators in attending this conference. I offered two complimentary tickets for any of their staff members in return for including the flyer in their school newsletter or sending one home with each student.

I tested this out with 20 schools and was astonished at how many emailed me accepting the offer and promoting it heavily within their community. I learnt that it is all about engaging with the influencers in your field and also, quite basically, letting people know what you are doing. You cannot assume that people will just randomly find out about your product or service.



Sharon, becoming the 'go to person' for issues around children and teens

How do you recommend business owners approach networking?

Word-of-mouth networking has been a huge part of my success in my business. I believe the greater your network, the greater your influence across your field.

Here are my top five tips for networking success:

1. Ensure you create a social media presence on as many platforms as you can. With literally millions of people using social media, you are able to reach a huge audience.
2. Engage with your tribe! Once you begin building your followers, you want to ensure that you actually engage with them and invite them on your journey. Many of my subsequent products have been created because I asked my tribe what resources I could create to help them raise strong and resilient children and teens. Share interesting articles, tips and ideas that provide encouragement and value to your tribe.
3. Be a cheerleader of others! I am a huge believer that there is room enough for everyone to be amazingly successful in their area of business and influence. I personally love to encourage and cheer people on, even those in the same field as me. This is a positive thing to do and it really does come back to you tenfold. Share in other's success and spread the word of what they do. If you are lucky, they may cheer you on in return, but don't cheer on others just for the sake of hoping they will return the favour. It doesn't work like that and in my opinion is bad karma.
4. Another thing I live by is simply being generous towards others. If someone needs your advice in their own business, or you could help give them an opportunity to build their own brand by exhibiting at your conference, do it. It costs you nothing but will continue to build your network.
5. There have been times when I have been asked to present for an organisation and I have waved my usual fee as they have a limited or no budget at all. If I feel I can add great value to that organisation or community I may accept regardless. I have been literally left speechless at times where I have taken up an opportunity, not thinking I would receive a great benefit from it, but then there might be one key influencer in the audience who connects with me and this leads to something much bigger. So my advice is, don't always dismiss an opportunity because it doesn't directly benefit you!

**The idea of having a side hustle is becoming more popular.
Can you explain what it is and why is it a smart idea?**

Side hustle is a term used to refer to a side business or another venture that you work on when you are not working in your day job. It is a great idea and for me it was something that occurred organically.

In my case, after working as a teacher for 15 years I began writing and publishing books for teenagers as my side project. I worked at night and on weekends writing my books in cafes and after working a full day of teaching teenagers. It was exhausting at times!

The idea of beginning a side hustle is a wise concept. If you are adverse to taking risks, which I certainly was, beginning a business on the side is a great idea to test the waters and see how you go with working in and growing your business.

For example, when I had my first child many years ago, I went on maternity leave and the very next day began a business creating my own handmade cards that I would then sell into florists, nurseries and cafes. I loved keeping busy and doing something creative whilst waiting for my baby to arrive and I did continue this small business for a couple of years after my baby arrived.

When I started out as a writer, having a day job meant I didn't need to stress too much about how many book sales I achieved or how many bookings to present I was offered. It was a slow and steady process to achieve what many see now as great success I am experiencing.

**Can you give us some examples of side hustles that don't
involve a significant capital outlay?**

There are so many opportunities for side hustles that you can create for yourself without going into enormous debt.

Writing, for just an example, costs you nothing except time. Creating content or writing a book to launch you into your field as an expert can be done with little expense. eBooks are relatively easy to produce and create in a PDF document format.

I know a gorgeous lady who began a side hustle business creating unique wooden products for children's bedrooms. She employed a lovely retired gentleman to produce her designs and together they formed a formidable team. He focused on building her products and she focused on dreaming, creating and sharing her amazing products on social media. Before long, this small business became a booming sensation that has achieved incredible success.

You may need to try a few side hustles before you find the one that fits and just feels right! I began with my homemade card business, then moved on to writing and publishing books, public speaking and becoming an expert in my field. Now, I run conferences for parents and educators around the country on building resilience in children and teens. My little 'side hustle' has become a huge business and continues to grow exponentially each year.

Once you've started a side hustle, how do you juggle the competing priorities of your job and your business?

This is where you need to be dedicated! If you are starting a side business you need to know that it will take lots of time and dedication in those initial years to build it into a success.

I spent my evenings and weekends writing and producing content. I still worked hard during the day as a teacher before the brand built up and my books went on to become best sellers. It took a few years before the business became self-sufficient, let alone profitable.

If your business is one that you are incredibly passionate about, it will be a joy to spend time working in it. For me, my absolute passion is

writing and creating resources for children, so working on my business was a great distraction from my intense day job.

What should you do if your side hustle doesn't appear to be working? Alternatively, what should you do if your side hustle takes off and you're now struggling to meet the requirements of your job?

You need to give your side hustle a specific amount of time and dedication before you decide it is not working and make the decision to let it go. It may begin as a small passion that you work on 'on the side' for a couple of years. You may find that after that time, it is no longer bringing you joy, or it is costing you too much money.

If that becomes the case and you feel it is just not working after a couple of years, you can choose to keep it on as a hobby or fun interest. That way, you don't have to stress about having to develop it into a thriving business.

On the other hand, if your side hustle takes off and you are struggling to fulfil your main employment, there will come a time when you may have to seriously consider taking that leap and backing yourself. There is no rule to say you have to be earning X amount of dollars before you give your boss notice. However, if you find that you are neglecting your day job, you need to make a decision at some stage which one you will make your main focus.

In my own journey, I slogged away at my side hustle for a number of years, teaching long days at school and often driving an hour or more to present in the evening at schools and other events and weekend conferences. I would fly interstate for media commitments or to speak at events, then arrive home on a Sunday evening to prepare for my week of teaching.

Sometimes, I would be up at the crack of dawn to drive an hour into the city to appear on a segment on a national television program, to then jump back in the car to drive to work and begin the day teaching. It was all worth it though because national exposure was something I couldn't put a price on.

In addition to building your business with a fulltime job, you've also been raising two children. What are your suggestions for parents who are building businesses with a young family?

It is certainly no easy feat beginning and running a business while raising children. But if you have the passion for your business then go for it! It's better to try and fail than never give it a go in the first place. My top tips would be:

1. *Build your support network* — Despite what you may think, you really cannot manage it all on your own. If you have family and friends who can offer some childminding support to give you a few hours to work on your business, then take it. You can always offer to help them out in return.
2. *Be organised* — It seems kind of obvious, but if you are raising children and running a household as well as building a business, you need to put systems in place to keep you organised. I am the queen of organisation and love stationery, so I have my diary and folders all sorted so there is a place for everything.
3. *Schedule family time* — When you are raising a family and building a business, it can be really easy for your business to feel like it is taking over and encroaching on valuable family time. Remember, your children are only this age once and will rely on you so fully for such a short season. Make the time to be 100 percent focused on your children.
4. *Screen free time* — This probably sounds strange considering my earlier tips about using social media for your marketing and

communication, however, taking time out from your devices is also crucial to building your business when you have young children. They need your full attention when you are choosing to give it to them.

5. *Look after you* — Driven people who are building a business while raising children can forget they also need to take care of all of the aspects of their own health so as to avoid getting unwell or burning out. Regular exercise, sleep, eating well and time out are all essential requirements for ensuring you have enough reserves to go the distance.

What do you see for the future of your business?

My business is just stepping up into a whole new level which is extremely exciting. I am revising and reprinting my first series of *Teen Talk* books, ten years after the first edition was published. I am also continually writing and publishing new books. The business is also moving in a new direction, which was not planned, but is the result of listening to the market. I am now in the process of expanding our parenting conferences into all national cities over the next couple of years, due to high demand. I have incredible support from key parenting and education experts across the country and I believe these conferences are going to be bigger than I could ever have planned or hoped for. My best piece of advice for anyone in their own business is to never set limits and always be open to new possibilities!

“ Regular exercise,
sleep, eating well
and time out
are all essential
requirements ... ”

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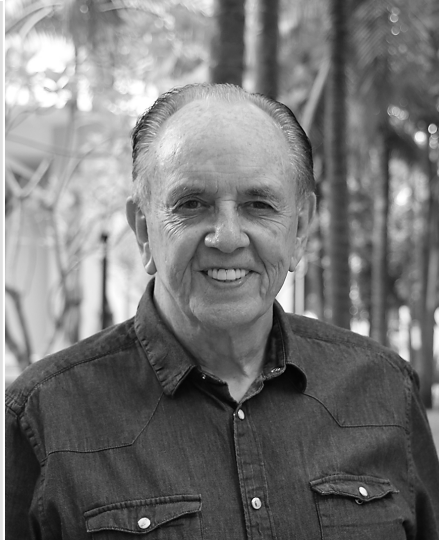
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FALL IN LOVE



PAUL DUNN

“ The result of our hard work is that B1G1 is a global movement of thousands of businesses.

We are heading towards 200 million giving impacts in 2018 and one billion by 2025. ”

A handwritten signature of Paul Dunn in black ink.

PAUL DUNN

Paul Dunn is a highly accomplished entrepreneur, international business coach and philanthropist.

During his early career, Paul was one of the first ten people to be employed by Hewlett Packard in Australia. After establishing and running his own successful computer business, Paul founded The Results Corporation, which has contributed to the growth of over 20,000 small and medium scale business enterprises. More than 236,000 people now use Paul's programs around the world.

As part of The Results Corporation, Paul's created the Accountants' Boot Camp, a training workshop attended by close to 20,000 accountants. His book *The Firm of the Future* has become standard text for leading accounting businesses around the world.

A Senior Fellow in one of the world's leading think tanks, Paul holds a Lifetime Service Award from the Accounting Profession in the UK. He has been honoured as a Social Innovation Fellow in his new home of Singapore; an accolade he shares with film-star and philanthropist Jet Li and Walmart Chairman, Rob Walton.

Paul continues to push the boundaries. He has been featured in *Forbes Magazine* alongside Sir Richard Branson in a globally distributed article on business disruptors.

Today, Paul is Chairman of B1G1: Business for Good. This non-profit organisation has enabled businesses to create over 140 million giving impacts around the world.

Paul was recently honoured by the peak Accounting Body in the UK as the first recipient of its 'Outstanding Contribution to the Profession' award. This is despite not being an accountant!

A global traveller, Paul is constantly flying to his next speaking engagement. He clocks up close to 800,000 kilometres each year — and he tells us his baggage goes twice as far.

When did you first discover you had entrepreneurial talent?

I wish I had one of those classic entrepreneurial stories that begin “I grew up in a poor family and then I discovered ...”

If I had entrepreneurial talent it was only being the lead singer in a band when I was 16 to earn money to put myself through college.

Then I simply got lucky, as you’ll see when you read on.

Who were your biggest business mentors? What important lessons did you learn from them?

As a Graduate Electronics Engineer, my first piece of luck was getting headhunted by Hewlett Packard in Australia. I was lucky enough to be one of the first ten people in the company. Imagine spending time learning from greats like Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard! It was a pretty cool start. From them, I learned that along with innovation, an extraordinary focus on relationships is crucial.

HP ‘unleashed’ me as a sales consultant to universities and the CSIRO as at the time the company produced amazing scientific measurement instruments.

I was lucky enough to be there when HP announced its first products in the computing space and to lead part of that effort in Australia. We had awesome training from Larry Wilson and Lee Dubois, who were some of the top sales experts at the time. I learned that customers hated to be sold to but they loved to buy. Above all, I learned the value of asking great questions.

Those questions helped me develop new business streams for HP in the previously untouched accountant marketplace. I wrote some pretty basic software, which I called AANCS — Australian Accountants

“ Results

Corporation grew into a multi-million dollar organisation across several borders. ”

Number Crunching System. I’ve got much better at naming things since then!

That experience led me to create one of Australia’s first computer companies with one of my HP customers, David Hartley. We grew that to a \$23 million company between 1973 and 1980.

When did you start your coaching/training businesses?

I got dragged to a James (Jim) Rohn seminar in Brisbane. The sales person told me, “Paul, I’ll rip your bloody arms off if you don’t come!”.

I didn’t much like the way Rohn presented. He stood behind a lectern and turned pages of a book. But I loved what he said. There were so many gems; “Never ask someone for a raise, ask them how you can add more value to them,” for example.

As I was watching him, it was as if I was in a time-tunnel — I could see myself being precisely where he was. It was that moment that launched my speaking career.

Rohn said, “Write a journal every day.” I’ve still got what I wrote that day: “Train 500 people this year”. In April 1981, we started Paul Dunn Training, which quickly morphed into The Results Corporation.

What was it about those early days that made you want to turn speaking and training into a career?

Results Corporation grew into a multi-million dollar organisation across several borders. Results was such a special place — you could almost smell it when you walked in. We pioneered so many things

from the way we hired people through to what we called the Results University and the way we obsessed about our customers.

We learned early that you have to hire ahead of growth not because of it. This was a good lesson as our growth happened very quickly. By 1990, we were serving around 23,000 customers on a global scale. We were the first people to bring legends like Michael Gerber and Jay Abraham to Australia.

In 1992, I saw the opportunity to refocus. It came about when an accountant named Ric Payne pointed out, as he put it at the time, “Paul you’re crazy. You’re doing great with all of these SMEs, but there’s no leverage”. Ric made me realise the obvious, which was that every single business with whom we were working had to go to an accountant!

So I developed both Results Accountants’ Systems and The Accountants’ Boot Camp.

Everyone I knew said it was crazy. They pointed out that (in their view) accountants would never pay \$7,000 to come to a four-day program. The concern was that they would sit there watching their watches because they kept time in six-minute units. Undeterred, I wrote a four-page mailing piece and sent it to about a thousand firms. In less than three days we had overfilled our first Accountants’ Boot Camp.

Pretty soon, news of the success spread to the US and to the UK. Thanks to some amazing partners in the profession we ended up with an office in almost every US state. In the UK, the Chartered Accountant’s Institute got firmly behind the program.

After just eight years, some 17,700 Accountants had come through the program investing, on average, \$7,000 to be there. As well as developing a lot of Accountant specific material, we re-jigged all the Results Corporation programs to focus on accountants delivering

the programs to their clients. The result of that was 92 per cent of firms investing around \$30,000 in those programs by the year 2000.

Were there any times you wanted to give up? What got you through?

I never wanted to give up, but I did have to learn to quickly find solutions.

In 1990, at my company Results Corporation, we had 74 people on the team and we'd completely forgotten that many people don't buy things in the Christmas period. So, we were running out of money fast. I'd just picked up Michael Gerber's first book — The E-Myth. It blew my mind and I figured he'd written it just for me.

It was then I realised we could add enormous value to people by getting Michael to come to Australia and do a tour in front of thousands of our customers. Over 900 people paid an average of \$500 to see him that first time. Enormous value added — crisis solved!

Having coached thousands of businesses through Results Corporation, Results Accountants Systems and now through B1G1, what do you believe are the key factors to business success?

When we started Results Corporation, we were clear that there were just four ways to grow a business.

1. Increase the number of customers (of the type you want to have)
2. Increase the frequency with which they deal with you
3. Increase the average price of every sale
4. Develop systems to keep you focused

Those things still apply but now there are other factors. Since 2009, I've learned and strongly believe that differentiation comes from determining 'Why'.

I've also learned that purpose and meaning are absolutely crucial. It's really important now for every business to make a real impact in our world so now all my mentoring beings with 'Why', 'Purpose' and 'Impact'. It's very rarely the big things that make the huge differences, which is why I focus on what I call the 'Huge Power of Small'.

By subtly shifting the way we express and articulate things, we can have a huge impact on revenue, profit and on customer delight. I mean 'delight', not just 'satisfaction'.

I'll never understand why some companies refer to filling events as 'getting bums on seats', why some airlines refer to 'customers' or worse still 'passengers' and why every waiter's order-pad in the country says 'number of covers'. How on earth can you deliver great events when your team talks about 'bums on seats' as opposed to 'guests'?

Using 'bums on seats' always has been and always will be a fireable offence in any company I'm associated with. Equally, if I hear business owners talking about 'staff' (as opposed to 'team') we need to have a deep and meaningful conversation.

Tell us where the inspiration came from for B1G1 (Buy 1, Give 1)?

B1G1 was a real gift in so many ways. Until 2006, I'd always believed that business was essentially about two things — adding enormous value to those you're privileged to serve and having fun doing that.

I had a life-changing moment in Bangalore in 2006. A friend took me to dinner with a man who had been deeply impacted by the 2004 tsunami. As a result of that I saw just how lucky I was. I realised I have an obligation to help those less fortunate than me.

That realisation hit the Reticular Activation System in my brain really strongly. Pretty soon I was seeing things I'd never even imagined I'd see.

I was mentoring a lot of business owners by 2007 and one of them was Masami Sato, the founder of B1G1. It was through a mentoring session that Masami imagined a very different world — a world where every transaction would give back. As she put it at the time, “B1G1 is a very important idea. If we can do it well we can create a world that's full of giving, and that's a happier world.”

This sounded a bit fanciful to me. I thought the concept related to customers getting things for free. But Masami explained, “What if by buying a TV, you are giving someone the gift of sight? Or if every time someone bought a cup of coffee, a child somewhere in the world got access to pure, lifesaving water? Or if every time a book sold, a tree was planted?” I was stunned and ready to become Masami's mentor for life. This meant funding B1G1 as a startup while we figured out how to make it work.

It took three solid years to get the ball rolling properly because we were doing things that simply hadn't been done before. The result of our hard work is that B1G1 is a global movement of thousands of businesses. We are heading towards 200 million giving impacts in 2018 and one billion by 2025.

What is B1G1 and how can businesses benefit from it?

To put it simply and accurately, B1G1 helps business owners around the world create more impact than they ever thought possible.

We've heard about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This has previously applied to what we might call the 'big end of town'. It has frequently been about large dollars and obligatory feel-good pieces in

shareholder reports. However, this culture of giving is now flowing to all levels of business.

The idea behind B1G1 is to say ‘What if?’. What if the coffee shop on the corner could say, “Every time you have a coffee here, a child gets access to pure, life-saving water.”? What if we could do that in such a way that it might cost only one-cent to make that happen?

And what if you could say on the bottom of every email that you write, ‘Sent from my iPhone and changing lives by providing a day’s education to a child in need through our partnership with B1G1’. The implications of that are profound when you consider that 2.6 million emails are sent every single second of every day.

As an example, we have accounting firm members who send gratitude certificates to their new clients. The certificates explain that every time they do business together something great happens in the world.

Imagine the connection the customer feels in these scenarios. The concept is about more than organisations handing over big cheques to charities. Instead, business owners are able to involve their team and their customers in something with tangible meaning and purpose.

With close to 800 seriously high-impact projects around the world, B1G1 makes positive change eminently possible.

Is B1G1 just something that is nice to do or can it have a noticeable and measurable positive difference on the bottom-line of an organisation?

People tell us it transforms their business when they integrate B1G1

“ The implications of that are profound when you consider that 2.6 million emails are sent every single second of every day. ”

by creating unique Giving Stories and showing them on their websites and so on.

They're retaining more customers and creating new ones more frequently. Dentists we know talk frequently about a 300 per cent increase in referrals.

Most interestingly though, no one I know does it for that reason. Their intent is always very, very clear — to make a real impact in and on our world via B1G1.

What are the different places within a business where you can add some social good?

As I mentioned, I'm passionate about the 'huge power of small'. In B1G1 terms this works brilliantly. You can look at almost any customer-facing or customer-related process and add in B1G1 to dramatically improve what I call 'Moments of Connection'.

B1G1 allows you to create what we call 'Giving Stories' where you link specific sales activities to creating impacts in projects of your choice. However, this is not just related to sales. When you think about 'Moments of Connection' so many ideas open up.

Here's a simple example: handing out your business card. When you have your logo on it plus 'Proudly a partner in B1G1: Business for Good', people will ask you about it. That gives you a great chance to talk about your 'Why', which is so much more powerful than talking about your 'What'.

Here's another idea. Instead of offering a discount for prompt invoice payment, start letting people know that when they pay on or before time, 13 children get access to e-learning for an entire month. Change the project each month and you'll be amazed at what happens.

You could also finish meetings by handing out a Gratitude Certificate, which simply thanks your prospect and points out that, for example, you've made it possible for nine Indigenous Children to get access to an education hub to change the trajectory of their lives.

In the broadest of terms, you isolate a process and ask, 'Is this the way the best company in the world would do this?'. Then you change the process to make sure you're that company. B1G1 helps you do that while simultaneously making a stunning difference in our world.



Paul with the Founder of B1G1, Masami Sato

How does B1G1 affect the people within your organisation?

People tell us B1G1 transforms organisations. In relation to team members, that's because of two things.

First, they love working with organisations that are seriously 'on purpose'. Stats in Australia alone suggest that in 'normal' companies, a staggering 87 per cent of team members are not actively engaged.

“ I use a simple method to help people craft their mission statement. ”

Being on purpose and letting your team members choose projects and Gratitude Certificates from within B1G1 completely changes that.

Why have you chosen to run your enterprise purely as a Not-for-Profit?

When we started B1G1, we wanted it to be different in every sense. So we run the company as a not-for-profit social business.

Our model allows us to be sustainable and to make sure that 100 per cent of members' giving goes to their chosen projects. This also helps us make sure that the project selection process is rock-solid.

How does a business go about selecting the causes they are most passionate about?

Traditional charity 'wisdom' tends to force us into a mindset of 'ABC company proudly supports XYZ charity'. Then companies tend to say things like 'X per cent of our profit on these items goes to charity'. Neither of these things resonate or connect in any way with team members or prospects and customers.

That's why B1G1 allows companies to select multiple projects that have varying impacts around the world. Then they change things up every month, just like great retailers change their displays frequently.

They might say things like January is 'Education Month' and select from many education-based projects that month. Then February might be 'Women's Empowerment Month' where you're selecting really powerful women-based projects like microloans and so on.

It's really easy to share information about B1G1 projects. You just have to send simple links to your clients or include them in your email signature.

You've helped a lot of people turn their purpose into a mission statement. Tell us what the formula is for getting this right?

Simon Sinek says it well when he says, "True purpose is always human." This means real purpose goes beyond product and service. Something that says "We aim to be the best ... blah blah blah ..." simply doesn't cut it.

I use a simple method to help people craft their mission statement. First, it's important you don't start by trying to write it down. That's because the 'you' who writes stuff down is very rarely the real you — when you write you'll use words you wouldn't normally use when you're speaking.

Perhaps surprisingly, a smartphone is the place to start.

Open the voice recorder on your phone, press the record button and say "I get up every morning to ..." and complete that sentence.

Hopefully something inspiring comes out. If it doesn't, keep going until it does. Then, usually at least, you will add two little words on the end, which really help you nail it.

Here's an example that really illustrates it:

Frequently, women might initially say something like this, "I get up every morning to be a great example for my children." On the face of it that sounds cool. But even though it's well-meaning and well-intentioned, it doesn't impress me.

You see, that statement is focused on you and what you want to have happen when someone hears you. You want other people to say, “Oh I’d love to be a part of that,” whether they’re investors, team members or customers.

So all we do is ask the person to add these two words to the first sentence ... ‘so that ...’

When people do that it might come out like this: “I get up every morning to be a great example for my children ‘so that’ they live a life that continually inspires those around them and ‘so that’ we can make a real difference in this community and eventually in our world.”

Hopefully, you see the difference. Now you’ve got something worthy of writing down. If you’re ‘stuck’ and you really can’t find your ‘Why’, simply put two words at the start.

Like this: “For now, I get up every morning to ...” and that will allow you to get a clear focus on what is happening for you at this moment.

Five-times best-selling Amazon book author and award-winning blogger, Bernadette Jiwa, puts it like this: ‘Our job is not simply to obsess about the features and benefits of what we’re making, it is to wonder and care about the difference we can make to people around us and to our world.’ That says it so well.

Is there a significant quote or saying which you live your life by?

When I started my speaking career in 1981, I was fortunate to be mentored by the late (and certainly great) Ron Tacchi.

Ron taught me so much and it still lives with me today. He explained that I was capable of getting standing ovations but that I should never speak if that was all I was after. He also reminded me that I was only ever as good as my last speech.

Most significantly, Ron taught me that it is important to always get butterflies before you speak. The trick is to do something to get the butterflies flying in formation.

For 36 years, every time I was about to speak, I'd stand at the back to the left of the stage and say to myself several times 'For them, for them, for them'. It got the focus right off me and onto the audience.

In 2017, I had a significant shift. It involved the simple change of one word and came about after someone sent me a link of an ad produced in Denmark. The ad was produced for the Government and dealt with Diversity. You can watch it if you Google 'YouTube TV 2 | All That We Share'.

After watching that three minute movie it became very clear to me that the 'For them' was unconsciously separating me from the audience. The moment I realised that, 'For them' became 'For us, for us, for us.' This reminds me every time not to judge and to remember this: we really are all one.

Having spent over 40 years in business, what do you see for the future and what companies are in the best position to succeed?

I like what David Rose, CEO of GUST said not that long ago: "Any company designed for success in the 20th century is doomed to failure in the 21st."

This means that your business model is crucial going forward. You need to redesign these models in exactly the way anyone who sets out to disrupt your business would do.

When you do adapt your model, you'll be walking (well, actually sprinting along) the exciting path that Peter Diamandis talks about when he says so correctly, 'Entrepreneurs are going to create more

wealth for themselves and for society over the next decade than we did during the entire 20th century.' The piece that really stands out for me in that are these three words 'and for society'.

For me, it's about continuing to be curious and remembering to totally resist the temptation to fall in love with your own product or service. The real 'trick' is to continually be in love with the customer who is using your product or service.

What is the most important thing you have learnt about succeeding in business?

Running a successful business is fundamentally about finding ways to add massive value to those you're privileged to serve.

What are some of your plans or goals for the next five to ten years?

2018 is the year I celebrate my 75th birthday. I'm thinking it's time to stop the really punishing, be-away-from-family, 150 speeches a year schedule and concentrate instead on mentoring others and writing.

Already, through B1G1, I'm mentoring what seems an impossible number of people one-on-one. I've found a way of doing it that people (and I) love. Going forward, I'll be expanding that and hopefully will be able to help create thousands of entrepreneurs who go on to do world-changing things.

Free BONUS GIFT

Paul Dunn has kindly offered a FREE BONUS GIFT valued at \$19.95 to all readers of this book.

A Personalised Giving Plan For Your Business — After creating a business that produced over \$20 million in revenue, Paul has dedicated his life to giving back and helping worthy causes around the world. Use this free guide to develop your own giving plan as a way to increase customer engagement and profit while making a positive contribution to the world.

Simply visit the web page below and follow the directions to download:

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FINAL THOUGHTS

We imagine that by now your head is probably spinning with a multitude of business-building strategies, and new ideas about what is really possible. It is clear that each of the entrepreneurs in this book share a number of constant messages – among them is that desire outweighs academic ability, continual growth is essential in business and that success is attracted to those that have the determination to keep going.

Despite the title of this book, there really is no great secret to being an entrepreneur. As this book demonstrates, all that you will ever require to succeed is freely available, as long as you have the drive, courage and ‘smarts’ to actively seek out what you need to know.

However, the real driver of success is simply *implementation* — the ability to put into practise, and take action on the things you hear and read. After years of working with people we have seen that this rarely happens by simply reading something once. It comes from re-reading, reflecting and then applying — not just once, but until it becomes a habit and part of your life.

With this in mind our strongest recommendation is that you do this exercise: re-read each of the chapters of this book, and with a notepad and pen by your side, write your answers to these two questions:

- What are the three most important things I’ve learnt from this chapter?
- How can I implement these learnings into my life, starting today?

Yes, we know that it is going to take some time, but as they say, the only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary. And we're not talking about physical work, a bit of solid thinking is all it takes. So give it a try, after a few short weeks you'll be amazed at the impact it will have.

Also, as we said in the preface of this book, you are your most valuable asset so make sure you keep investing in yourself. That is why we have provided the many bonuses for you. Make sure you go to the webpage (that's if you haven't already) and download all of the gifts. They contain some fantastic material, which you will wholeheartedly enjoy.

In closing, remember this: 'Nobody can go back to the beginning and make a brand-new start. But everyone can start from now and make a brand-new end', so begin on your path now! Don't worry about the past, and don't worry that you don't know enough — you probably never will. Just make a start, begin on your path today and continue learning as you go.

We trust that you've enjoyed this book. It has been a real honour to work with these amazing people and share their stories. Take their ideas to heart, put them into action and watch your dreams soar.

DREAM BIG!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale Beaumont". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized capital 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the final 't'.

Dale Beaumont

P.S. For anyone either looking to start their own business, or already doing it, we suggest also reading our two previous books; *Secrets of Male Entrepreneurs Exposed* and *Secrets of Female Entrepreneurs Exposed*.

Although, written more than 10 years ago, much of the principles and strategies are just as relevant today. So please follow the directions on the next pages to secure your copies today.

P.P.S. We love receiving letters or emails from people who have been inspired by something shared in one of our books, so please contact us with your stories of inspiration.

<http://dalebeaumont.com/contact>

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR *free* BONUS GIFTS

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FREE GIFT # 1 (\$10.00) Save 20% on Your First Order — If you're looking for a gift that is bold, vibrant, striking and colourful, look no further than a piece of jewellery from Ruby Olive. With this gift, you'll save 20% on your first order of a stunning statement piece that will put a smile on your face and those you meet.

FREE GIFT # 2 (\$47.00) The Top 30 Tax Minimisation Strategies — Think you are paying too much tax? This information-packed white paper is for you. Developed by Mark Williams and the team at Imagine Accounting, its purpose is to help you pay the least amount of tax legally possible. In it, you'll discover no less than 30 strategies that will help you keep more of your hard-earned money. These are strategies every single business can benefit from so take a look today.

FREE GIFT # 3 (\$29.95) 'Quote Like-A-Pro System' Cheat Sheets — Learn to design a professional and detailed quote in less time, giving you a decent profit margin and a higher likelihood of winning the work you are quoting for. If you want a life of true freedom, this downloadable eBook from Andy and Angela Smith could be the defining moment to change the course of your life and your business forever!

FREE GIFT # 4 (\$47.00) 17 Nutritional Principles to Create Long Lasting Results — Having trained hundreds of prize-winning body shapers, Mark Ottobre is one of Australia's leading fitness coaches. At the top of this game, Mark is motivated to give back to anyone who wants to lose fat and create the body of their dreams. Download this video and audio and follow the steps — you'll be amazed at your personal transformation.

FREE GIFT # 5 (\$24.95) 10 Things That You Need To Look For When Starting Or Buying A Beauty Business — Michelle has completed extensive business training with Tony Robbins, Business Blueprint and The National College of Business and has studied many different business models. She has spoken to both business owners and serial entrepreneurs and put together

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a FREE report and checklist that details what you need to look out for if you are thinking of buying or starting any type of beauty business.

FREE GIFT # 6 (\$34.95) The Essential Cloud Apps Guide — This guide is an up-to-date list of Peter Moriarty's most recommended cloud software tools for business owners who want to increase their team's productivity and grow a more prosperous and agile business. The guide includes many tools to help you get more done with less and leverage technology for business growth.

FREE GIFT # 7 (\$24.95) 5 Ways To Double Your Website Leads In The Next 30 Days — From starting his first business with just \$250 to making \$1 million in profit in five years, Kody Thompson has learnt a lot and is now ready to share his knowledge. In this five-part video series, Kody will show you actionable strategies that will dramatically boost the number of enquiries you receive through your website.

FREE GIFT # 8 (\$19.95) 10 Years To An Overnight Success — Having started her business with nothing more than an idea, Tina Tower went on to win the Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year award and sell her company for millions of dollars. In this eBook, she shares her inspiring story and lifts the lid on the most important strategies that led to her success.

FREE GIFT # 9 (\$20.00) Save \$20 on 'Resilient Kids' Conference — After publishing 12 books for teenagers, Sharon Witt decided it was time to start helping parents. The result of this decision was the creation of a conference called 'Resilient Kids', which gives parents direct access to some of the best child-raising experts in the country. In just one day, you'll hear from six highly sought-after experts and discover how to create more resilient kids.

FREE GIFT # 10 (\$19.95) A Personalised Giving Plan For Your Business — After creating a business that produced over \$20 million in revenue, Paul Dunn has dedicated his life to giving back and helping worthy causes around the world. Use this free guide to develop your own giving plan as a way to increase customer engagement and profit while making a positive contribution to the world.

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About the author

DALE BEAUMONT

Dale Beaumont is best known as an Award-Winning Technology Entrepreneur, International Speaker and Best-Selling Author.

Having started his first business at the age of 19, Dale went on to build three different million-dollar companies before the age of thirty.

One of these companies saw Dale write and publish 16 books, which have collectively sold over a quarter of a million copies. Incredibly, 11 of those 16 books were published in a single year, a feat that earned him the title 'Australia's Most Prolific Author'.

This was followed by the launch of Business Blueprint, an education company designed to help ambitious entrepreneurs build the business of their dreams. Ten years on, Dale has personally trained over 50,000 people and produced over 1,000 business training videos.

In 2015, Dale decided to go global, setting a goal to help one million people discover the blueprint for business success. To achieve this, Dale and his team launched Biziversity — a revolutionary product which offers direct access to 'The World's Best Business Training. Anywhere, Anytime.'

Best described as the 'Netflix for Business', Biziversity gives you exclusive access to over 1,000 TV-quality videos, presented by over 250 leading business experts from around the globe.

As a result of Dale's success, he has been interviewed on Today Show, Mornings, Sky News Business, ABC Radio as well as being featured in over 100 newspapers and magazines, including *Forbes*, *The Huffington Post*, *Business Insider*, *Gizmodo*, *Men's Health* and *GQ*.

After becoming a father in 2007, Dale decided to dedicate more time to his family. Following the formula of 'two months work, one month adventure', Dale and his family have now travelled to over 75 countries. This includes stepping foot on all seven continents (yes even Antarctica), visiting all five Disneyland parks and volunteering in several orphanages.

For the last five years, Dale and his wife Katherine have been supporting the charity 'Hands Across the Water'. By partnering with Business Blueprint clients, they have now collectively raised over \$1,500,000, which now supports 350 children with food, education, medical needs and most importantly love.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

We would again like to say a huge ‘thank you’ to the amazing people who have helped to make this book possible. Some of them have their own books and other educational products – for more information, feel free to contact them directly.

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As a result of Dale's success, he has been featured in Forbes, The Huffington Post, Business Insider, Gizmodo and GQ, to name a few.

On a personal note, Dale is married to wife Katherine and is a father to two fast-growing boys.

For more information
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