



NATASHA MACKENZIE

Natasha graduated 20 years ago with a Bachelor of Business. She was snapped up by the Department of Treasury and Finance as a graduate accountant and had the opportunity to move around various Departments within the State Government. She also completed her CPA studies in this time and become a full CPA after the further two and a half years of required study. Throughout her career, she has had opportunities to work in large corporate companies, not for profits, and public practice. She has been an analyst, an accountant, a CFO and an auditor, to name just some of her extensive experience. Now she utilises her knowledge and experience to help small and medium business realise their full potential with her own business, MCM Business Solutions.

Tell us about your business, and how you started.

I had decided to take a break in my career and focus on my family. After 3 years, I realised I couldn't stay at home much longer. I needed to contribute to the family income and I could see that in a short time my kids were going to be at school and I'd be sitting at home. That wasn't me at all. I tried to get a part time job. I applied for every position I could, from the position I had held prior to my break, right down

to entry level positions. I lost count of the number of positions I applied for, and eventually I was told I was unemployable. That was like a red flag to a bull.

I thought to myself, 'I'll show you'. But I didn't have the confidence to start out on my own. So after much research and due diligence, I purchased a franchise. Within 6 months, I was in a legal battle because the franchisor had broken the franchise code of conduct and had broken the law on many counts. We settled out of court and I started what now is MCM Business Solutions. Although franchising was the biggest mistake I could've made, it also showed me that I knew what I was doing and gave me the confidence to go out on my own.

MCM Business Solutions started as a bookkeeping business in my home. I was helping giving business owners' time back to them so they could spend that time working on growing their business or spend the time with their family. The use of cloud accounting software made it



easy for me to be home with my youngest child whilst earning money. The business quickly grew and I needed to employ my first staff member.

As the business continued to grow, we moved into an office and we are now a team of six. Since my experience trying to get back into the workforce, my team has all been from a return to work situation and they're amazing.

My clients enjoy working with me and my team that and needs. We now offer bookkeeping to accounting services, compliance including BAS, payroll, HR support and tax as well as Virtual CFO, business advisory and business mentoring services.

How do you manage your time and productivity while working virtually?

I block out time. We schedule out what needs to be completed for each client, such as meetings, and we're all very disciplined. Being virtual means that I can work from either my home, office or whilst away on either business or pleasure. All I need is a laptop and an internet connection.

Although my team can all work from their home, I made the conscious decision that we work together in an office environment and are virtual to our clients. We find it extremely beneficial to get together in person and discuss the different aspects that we're working on for each client. We bring the knowledge and different points of view altogether for the benefit of our clients rather than

together having to liaise with multiple businesses.

When working from home, I have a designated area that has no distractions. Whilst it's hard not to stop and run my household tasks, I also know that my clients are paying me and it's extremely important to me that my clients see the value that I'm adding to their business and that helps me focus.

Has your initial business strategy aligned with reality? How did it differ? How did you adapt?

My initial strategy was pretty naive. I thought I would keep the business in my home. It became clear pretty quickly, that the reality was going to be pretty different. The business took over my house and my life. I found because clients knew I worked from home, they thought they could contact me anytime of the day or night. I had clients calling me at nine and ten o'clock at night. Whilst I was happy to help them, I needed to set boundaries. After all, I had a family that still needed me. Also, none of the issues were that time sensitive that they couldn't email me whilst they thought of it and I could respond in a timely manner. Moving into the office naturally set some boundaries. Clients now have my mobile number, but they respect that I have a family and the evening is their time and I'll respond to their emails, texts, messages when I can.





I also found that it was physically taking over my house. I started in the business in the study, however when I employed my first team member, they sat in my lounge room. It was rather uncomfortable and I always had to ensure the house was tidy which in reality was almost impossible with my kids.

Has it given you a more harmonious lifestyle?

In a word, yes. I have the flexibility to work from home when the kids are sick or on holidays. I can work when I'm on holidays (although for mental health, I always suggest having a decent break from your business) and I can help businesses across all of Australia. Without cloud software, I would be restricted to the area I was willing to travel to.

Being virtual has increase my efficiency. I don't have to include travel time into my day. Meetings can be conducted via online meeting software and screens can be shared so we're looking at the same data.

Eventually, we will offer our Virtual CFO, and business advisory and mentoring services across the world, but we want to become more established in Australia for now.

Do you think this is suitable for most people?

It really does depend on what you offer. Some services will always have to be onsite for example, garden maintenance and cleaning. However, shopping and professional services are easily made virtual. Even doctor visits are becoming virtual. I'm sure in time, innovation will play a part in making almost everything virtual. However, I still believe there is a need for human interaction and not just over the internet. We need to connect with people. We need to find that balance between efficiency and basic human needs.

Contact Natasha through

<https://www.mcmbusinesssolutions.com.au>