

PODCAST 1



After you've worked for someone else for a while the temptation to start your own trade business is great. You can spend less time on the tools, you can have a team of people doing all the work while you rake in the money, you can take more time off to go fishing or pay golf or whatever floats your boat.

The reality is that most people find that they've switched a regular paying job for a situation where they work longer hours than ever before for not much more money and a lot more stress.

Howzatt?

They're confronted with tasks and issues they've never had to worry about before.

... Endless paperwork.

... Preparing quotes.

... Following people up.

... Hiring, managing and even firing staff or subbies.

... Purchasing equipment and supplies.

... Health and Safety procedures and paperwork.

... Cashflow, bookkeeping.

And then there's the marketing.

The logo, the business cards, the website, the advertising. Where and how do you market your trade business effectively? How do you compete when there's loads of other companies out there offering the same as you do? How do you know what the best type of marketing is?

They didn't cover any of this stuff in trade school! You have to learn it all as you go. You have to become a damn expert at everything. And quite frankly, who's got the time or the energy. At the end of the day you're dog tired and all you want to do is curl up on the couch with a cold beer and a hot dinner. Not face hours of paperwork or research.

My name is Annette Welsford, and I've helped many small business owners

This podcast is designed to help you cut through all the crap and find out what to do and what not to do.

I've spoken to so many tradies who've been ripped off by unscrupulous advertising and marketing people and it just makes me sick. Quite often they don't even know they've been ripped off until I ask a few questions they can't answer, yet they've paid good money to get a new website built or for SEO services or for google adwords advertising. One electrical contractor client paid out thousands for his website and seo. I asked him to show me his google analytics account so we could review traffic, keywords, pages etc. There were no results. The company hadn't added Google Analytics (GA) to his website! But they'd certainly charged him for it.

Another plumber did at least have Google Analytics on his site, but his marketing company had never shown him through his GA account, so he had no idea what to look for. He was blindly paying a lot of money per month for Google ads, but had no idea whether they were working or not. I was able to show him that he had plenty of traffic, but the website needed a lot of work as people were only staying a few seconds, and he wasn't getting the calls.

Others have paid out thousands to so called business coaches who do nothing more than tell them things – eg: get organised, improve your cashflow, get help. One client – a tradie in Melbourne, paid well over a \$1000 per month to a business consultant who did just this. One call a month, to be told what steps to take. Just basic textbook 101 business advice. No help on how to do it, no offer to help with some of the tasks, no action plans etc.

In coming weeks we're going to explore business success tips for tradies in a lot more detail. We'll look at all types of marketing and advertising and business systems, and many different types of trade businesses.

But before we even go there – let's get a few of the basics right first.

If you want to grow your business, you need to be focusing your attention on several things all at the same time. You cannot leave any of these out !

1. Your mindset

If you currently take home \$100-200k a year as a one man band, then making 2, 3, 4 or 5 times this amount will involve changing your mindset from the doer to the business owner. If you look in the mirror and think "I'm just a poor plumber or I'm no good with words or paperwork, or I don't know the right people, or I hate selling - you need to work on your mindset because your lack of self confidence will emanate from you. These hangups will become your blockages that will hold you back, will become your excuses for not achieving what you want to do.

However if you see a competent, clever, valuable, worthwhile, confident person looking back at you (who isn't cocky and self opinionated) – that's great. It means you value your abilities and you believe you can achieve whatever you want to. Cocky people come a cropper in business because they don't listen to advice and people don't like them. Your mindset is very important. The first element of mindset is believing in yourself. The second element is how you look at the world. Do you see opportunities everywhere – or competitors everywhere? Mindset is such a big subject that it's worth a whole episode on its own, and we'll be doing that soon.

2. Your Time Management

If you want to grow a successful business, you do need to manage your time well. There's so many books and training courses on time management and I've read many of them and been on a couple of courses. They each had good suggestions and bad suggestions – things that just don't work practically.

The book I wholeheartedly recommend is the first chapter of Chet Holmes Book called the Ultimate Sales Machine. He broke it down into six simple steps.

- 1 – Touch it once.
- 2 – Make lists because you will not remember everything
- 3 – Plan how much time you will allocate to each task on your list
- 4 – Plan your day
- 5 – Prioritize. Do the most important (and often the hardest) things first.
- 6 – Simplify. Ask yourself "will it hurt me to throw this away – eg: piece of paper or email.

In a future podcast we'll look at these in more detail and show you how you can move from being reactive to proactive.

How **you** decide what you're going to do every minute of the day – not other people. It takes discipline and commitment, but it really works. And if you want to grow your trade business, you will need to spend less time on the tools and more time being a proactive marketer.

3. Your customer management

Aah, customers.

Most of them are wonderful. A few are a right royal pain in the you know what. But without them, you don't have a business.

Interestingly enough turning up and doing a good job for a customer is not enough to build a solid future business on. You need to do a lot more than this if you really want to fast track your growth.

Why?

Because customers expect you to do a good job. That's mandatory.

What they really want is great service. And that is where most trade businesses fall down.

They do the job. That's it. They don't know what their customers really want. They don't contact them regularly. They don't tailor their marketing activities to appeal to clients' needs.

Most trade businesses are clones. They have the same ads in the local paper, their websites (if they have one) say the same thing – they make it very hard for people to choose one over the other.

Prospects rarely get followed up more than once. Most tradies leave a quote and hope to get called. Some will ring – but only once. If they do get the job, then there's very rarely any follow up after the work has been done, and this is where 90% of trade business owners are leaving money on the table.

This is my area of passion and expertise and what I will be focussing on the most in future podcasts.

4. Your staff

You may not have staff yet, or you may have one or two full time staff or sub-contractors. If they're doing work for you then your customers think they are your staff – and how you pay them (as a salaried worker or a sub contractor) is irrelevant. Always think of them as staff.

How you treat your staff will have a direct bearing on how they will treat your customers. And because it's not their business but yours – you need to make sure they are happy, or it will have a big impact on your reputation, future business and profits.

What – I hear you say? Now my staff's happiness is my problem and I'll go out of business if they come to work unhappy?

Well as far-fetched as that sounds, it could easily be true. If you have a disgruntled employee, he's not going to show you loyalty. He's going to resent you making more money than him, not being on the tools, driving a flash car, or whatever. It will fester. He will not feel like defending your company when the client complains – but rather could bad mouth you. And this happens a lot.

A major worldwide study conducted by the famous Gallup Poll revealed that in Australia only 24% of workers are engaged, a whopping 60% of workers are not engaged and 18% are actively disengaged.

Actively disengaged workers are more likely to steal from their companies, negatively influence their co-workers, miss workdays, and drive customers away. This is another big topic which we'll explore in more detail in a future episode, but in the meantime, make sure you're listening to your people's suggestions and their gripes. Communicate often and show them how much you appreciate them. It will pay off big time.

5. Your Systems

Most importantly, to grow your business you need systems. Systems that can scale with you easily as you grow bigger.

What do I mean by systems? It relates to everything you do.

- A system for answering the phone and passing on messages
- A system for preparing and following up quotes
- A system for refreshing your website so that google regularly indexes it and you move up the search engine results to end up on page 1 of results for relevant keyword searches
- A system for measuring your marketing results to see which activities are bringing you the most leads and the best leads
- A system for contacting all your clients on a regular basis
- A system for unpacking and packing the work van so everything is always easy to find and damage or loss is kept to a minimum
- A system for scheduling work and not running late for appointments
- A system for getting your clients to refer you, instead of just hoping they do

The biggest benefits of having systems in place is quality control and continuity. Things are done properly – every single time. Nothing is left to chance.

So here's the key take aways from today's episode.

1. **Take a look at your mindset.** Do you see opportunities everywhere? Or do you just see competitors? Do you believe in yourself or do you think you're not good enough? As Henry Ford said – "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right."
2. **Start managing your time** well so that the day doesn't slip by and you still haven't achieved 3 of the 5 things you had to get done today. We all have exactly the same amount of time, but some people achieve more in that time because they manage it better. And they learned how to do this – it's not an innate talent.
3. **Don't be a clone.** Make it easy for people to choose your business over your competitors. Don't just do the job properly. Be outstanding – before, during and after you've done the job. Your goal is to knock their socks off with your delightful service.

4. **Keep your staff happy.** Listen to them. Keep them informed. Put effort into training and systems. Disengaged disgruntled staff will seriously affect your business.
5. **Develop your systems.** Think about everything you do and systemise it so you and your team do things properly, and nothing falls through the cracks. You deliver a high quality and reliable service – every time. It will pay off big time.

So in summary, I'm sure you understand all these principles. After all they're just commonsense. And that's the name of my main marketing business – Commonsense Marketing.

I'll be sharing with you new things, and things that you need to hear and discuss and review on a regular basis.

What will make the big difference in your business is if you act with pig headed discipline and determination. We're all good at getting great ideas from workshops, books, podcasts, mentors, coaches, articles and other business owners. The problem is that most people don't adapt the best ideas and implement them.

Action, not ideas, is the key to real success.

If you'd like some more useful marketing ideas and instant notification when a new podcast episode is ready – simply enter your email address above. And don't worry, we won't bombard you with useless irritating messages. We only contact you when we have something worthwhile to say that we think you might find interesting.

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I'm Annette Welsford and I'm dedicated to helping you make your trade business an overwhelming success.



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