

OPERATING YOUR
SMALL BUSINESS

AUSTRALIA'S NO. 1
SMALL-BUSINESS MAGAZINE



inside **small**
business

SUMMER 2017

WRITE YOUR OWN SCRIPT

How to make your
small-business story
a successful one

DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

Plan, plan and
plan some more

THE DISRUPTORS

How FinTech is making life
easier for SME owners



ISSN 2202-3496
9 772202 349003
Issue 15
\$8.95 incl. GST

Endorsed by



CASE STUDIES | FRANCHISING |
Q&AS | INNOVATION | OVERCOMING
CHALLENGES | & MORE

WRITING YOUR OWN SCRIPT

Bernadette Schwerdt

While recognised as a TV actress, Bernadette Schwerdt is a woman of many roles, and when it comes to business knows how to turn passion into profit.

BY TIM LADHAMS

When Bernadette Schwerdt isn't busy acting in television shows like *Jack Irish*, *Neighbours* and *Winners and Losers*, you'll find her just as happy in her other roles as founder of the Australian School of Copywriting, a best-selling author, speaker and... bumbler.

Quitting a high-flying corporate advertising career in the 1990s to follow her dream of acting has made for an unusual but meaningful career path, culminating in becoming a digital entrepreneur, author and public speaker. Ultimately, being herself has given her and her young family the best of both worlds.

From an early age, the call of the theatrical world proved irresistible for Schwerdt.

"I always wanted to go to drama

school, I just didn't know where to go or how to start," she says of her teenage years in South Australia.

"I was an extra in a TV commercial where I saw a woman from the advertising agency walking around with a clipboard. She looked very important and like she was having fun, and I thought 'That's it - I want to be in advertising.'"

While undertaking a degree in marketing at the University of South Australia, Schwerdt followed her passion for acting at night classes. After university, she worked in advertising in the US for several years, returning to Australia to work as a senior publicist with entertainment industry icon Harry M. Miller.

"It was a short stint but absolutely instrumental, working with many of the big names of the time. But it was

also a reality check. I knew I still had to give acting a go. I was 28, and wasn't getting any younger."

In a leap of faith, she swapped corporate life in Sydney for student life at the Victorian College of the Arts, studying drama. "Getting that acceptance phone call was one of the happiest days of my life, and I knew I had to do it," Schwerdt says.

NO PICNIC

But drama school was no picnic and much harder than she thought. "My income went from very good to zero. I had no idea it would be so full on – five days a week, nine hours a day, for three years. But those three years taught me a lot of about stagecraft, vocal projection and persuasion, which has been invaluable in my role as a public speaker."



“WE HAVE TO MOVE WITH THE MARKET AND BE IN A CONSTANT PROCESS OF REINVENTION - OF OUR PRODUCT OFFERING, OUR SKILLS AND OURSELVES.”

Schwerdt harnessed those theatrical skills to the full in delivering her TedX talk in Melbourne, “How to stumble your way to success”.

“My intention for that speech,” she says, “was to give people permission to stumble through the early stages of a job, a start-up, a relationship or anything really. We expect to get things right first time, and when we don’t we are either ridiculously hard on ourselves or we give it up prematurely. Anything meaningful comes only after we’ve stumbled through those awful, awkward stages.”

Schwerdt herself is living proof this approach can work. The creation of her online training company was a large bumble that has paid off.

“It started as a short course in copywriting,” she explains, “and although it was always a sell-out, it was just a hobby. That changed when I had my son. I was travelling extensively as a trainer, actor and marketing consultant and had to ask, ‘How am I going to keep doing this with a new-born baby?’, so I converted the short course into an online course, and it went from there.”

She knew she was on to something when people started dropping money into her account to buy the course while she slept. When she woke up one morning and found \$1000 in her account, she told herself, “Let’s do more of this”.

TURNING POINT

That was the turning point for her becoming serious about the business.

“Once I got the taste for passive income, I devoured everything I could about online marketing, but most of

the stories were of American entrepreneurs. I wanted to read Australian stories, but couldn't find anything - so I went out and wrote the book I wanted to read."

That book, *Secrets of Online Entrepreneurs*, has just been declared a best-seller and is in its second reprint. She is now working on her second book. Among her other activities, she travels the country speaking at conferences about digital disruption, innovation and technology.

"Digital disruption is a hot topic, but what it's really about is the process of reinvention," says Schwerdt. "We can't stay still any more and hope things will work out. We have to move with the market and be in a constant process of reinvention - of our product offering, our skills and ourselves. If we don't, we quickly become irrelevant."

What has become clear is that Schwerdt has carved out a niche enabling her to turn her passion for reinvention into profit. As a result, people are increasingly asking her to help them reinvent their businesses. She says many people have a burning passion to do something, but are not able to monetise it. That's where she comes in, helping people take a business or idea and turn it into an online business. She shows them how to scale their idea by leveraging technology, identifying strategic partnerships and creating digital content like webinars, ebooks, podcasts and other virtual tools.

Her definition of success is not conventional, but it works for her. "Money is important - it's up there with oxygen - but my definition of success is to have control over my time and choices, to do more of what I love and less of what I don't. That's taken a long time to accomplish, but it has definitely been a fun ride and worth the effort." ■

SEVEN

TOP TIPS FOR BUMBLING TO SUCCESS

Here are Bernadette Schwerdt's top seven tips for business success...

#1 EMBRACE THE BUMBLE.

Don't beat yourself up about not knowing something before you've even started. Accept that "bumbling along" is a respectable strategy.

#2 DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS.

Work out what is important for you, avoid comparing yourself with others and pursue your own version of success.

#3 SET GOALS BUT LET GO OF THE TIMING.

Set firm goals but don't be attached to when they happen. We can control the input, but not the output.

#4 KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS.

Invest in a personality profile test and find out exactly what types of people you need around you in order to grow the business.

#5 SAY YES, AND WORK THE REST OUT LATER.

Take opportunities as they arise and don't expect to ever have the full picture before you start something.

#6 CREATE A SELF-IMPOSED DEADLINE.

Impose a tough deadline for yourself and make it known publicly so you can't let yourself down.

#7 ENJOY THE JOURNEY.

Trust that you will reach your goals, so start enjoying the journey now. Life is short.