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Interview with Sherryn McBride - Marketing Talk



Sherryn McBride owns and operates the independent consultancy, 'Marketing Talk', supplying cost effective solutions and ideas to companies throughout the Perth region. Sherryn is listed amongst 20 entrepreneurial Australian women in AMI's 'Management Today' magazine, she has also been featured in the 'Growing Business' section of the WA Business News and has been reviewed as a 'Success Story' by the Small Business Development Corporation. Let's explore Sherryn's strengths - 'making sense of marketing' and get to know her a little bit more.



Candidate
Featured Candidate ID# 81400

Industry:
Media / Web Designing

Career Summary:
I am currently studying Multimedia Design at Curtin as a 3rd year student and am looking for a job in my field.

Skills/Achievements:
Animation 2D and 3D. Web Design. Excellent Graphic Design Skills. Think outside the box and very creative.

Personality:
Bubbly, Reliable, Passionate, Honest, Hard working.

Availability:
Immediately

Salary:
\$25,000 -> \$30,000

Eligibility for Work in Australia:
Student Visa

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Sherryn, thank you for taking the time to talk with the Nifnex community today and share some of your experience in building a successful small business, to begin, can you give us a little background information on yourself and 'Marketing Talk'.

Well, I spent 25 years in corporate business working my way up to running campaigns, project management and on to state management. Later I started freelancing in the PR and Project Management sector, eventually re-branding the operation in 2006 as a pure marketing consultancy and Marketing Talk was born.

So how many do you employ in the company?

I control the operation and have a contract team of three to call upon for any administration back-up or project work. So it is a very small team. I can cover most aspects of the business having 20 plus years experience at a senior level. Basically I'm doing what I did before but now it is my company.

How does 'Marketing Talk' attract its customer base?

I don't advertise in the normal manner, most of my business comes from word of mouth/client referrals and repeat business, and I have a number of websites that create other passive incomes.

What would you say your greatest success had been since starting the company?

Probably the thing I am most proud of is that seven of my clients have won sixteen awards between them. It proves that the strategies I put together are working and that kind of success is the most exciting element of the job. I love to help other companies succeed, especially when all SME's are up against so much in the current economic climate. It shows that marketing your product or service in the right way can bring about incredible results.

Turning the tables around, what would you say has been your greatest failure?

I think failing to convince companies that a marketing strategy can work for them. When that happens, I feel as though I have failed. Not so much for my business but for theirs. I feel like I have let a client down, perhaps not explained it in a distinct enough way. I know that marketing and branding work. I have hundreds of clients that are testament to that.

What would you say are the main problems facing SME's in business today?

Most put all their eggs in one basket. They find a niche and stick to it or one big client and work all out for them. It is perfect to have a niche, we all need one, but you have to look at some type of back up. Diversifying into adjoining disciplines or something that compliments the company's current services or products means if one market or customer dries up, there are others there to keep the business operating.

Do you think the government offer enough assistance to SME's?

I don't think there is enough recognition given to this sector considering there are more than 200,000 small businesses in WA, and small business accounts for 95% of all the businesses in the state. The SBDC does offer practical workshops and their BiZFIT program has been especially good. Regardless of who provides it, everyone needs to up-skill as part of their learning curve, and the right trainer or business mentor can give invaluable help to new and existing businesses.

Are you involved in any business networking groups?

I love networking groups, it is a way to meet like minded business professionals and if you get the right group, there is knowledge to be shared, business to be referred and business to be gained.

What about trade shows?

Trade shows don't really fit with my business model. They are an excellent method of promotion for the right business, they just don't suit everyone.

So Sherryn, you have been in business since 2001 originally PR and Project Management then Marketing Talk from 2006 on, with that experience, what three pieces of advice would you give to someone starting out in business today?

I think the main thing is to brand your company really well. You want clients to instantly recognise your service or product and remember it. Close behind and in a similar vein, you need to research and spend time putting your promotional and marketing side together, both on and off line. The third element that I think is important is asking the client how they found you. This can help monitor what is and isn't working in your advertising and marketing area and allow you to test, measure and adjust your strategy.

What about three pitfalls to avoid?

The big one is cash, spending more than you have coming in can be a killer. Spreading yourself too thin across your market can be equally damaging. You need to keep your services tight and controllable. Last, don't fall into the trap of being too eager to get the business, come across desperate and the client feels it. A simple thing to remember is 'Fake it, till you Make it'.

If you could pick one thing you do everyday that has helped drive your business forward, what would it be?

Communication, definitely communication. You need to keep in touch with your database or client list on a regular basis; this helps build relationships. But don't just call your client for work, talk to them about their business, their achievements and future hopes. All clients want companies that take an interest in helping them, not just taking money from them.

If you were not in this industry and running your business, what would you be doing?

Eating and drinking my way through Europe.

Who do you think would win a fight between Julia Gillard and Pauline Hanson?

That's a different question. Well, they are both red heads so the temper is there but I think Pauline, she seems to have more tenacity, more guts.

Who are your main competitors?

I don't really have any direct competition. Businesses either choose a boutique marketing consultancy or employ a marketing manager/business development manager. Most don't realise there is an affordable choice between the two, and there are not many freelance marketers and copywriters in Perth.

Who would you most like to emulate in business and why?

Well, there are so many that I admire that it would be hard to choose. From a personal perspective Anne Blythe spoke so eloquently and with so much humility during the Queensland floods. You could see she was speaking from the heart. And I always remember something a friend told me, 'Just be you, because everyone else is taken, which kind of brings you back to reality.

So Sherryn, what do you do to relax and do you think you get enough relaxation?

I love to walk along the foreshore and enjoy yoga when ever I can. I also read, generally a business book and a novel on the go at the same time. I think relaxation is important, you need to get a good balance between work and life and I believe I have that balance, well, almost.

Sherryn, thank you so much for sharing your experience with us, I am sure there are many new businesses out there who if they read this piece will be able to apply a lot of principles you have outlined and help their business flourish.

To find out more about Sherryn [Click here](#)

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