

up close + personal with david guille

What motivated you to move away from being a Chartered Accountant and enter the Commercial Construction industry?

My Dad spent nearly 40 years mowing lawns and although it was small was still a business that showed me that whilst life can be tough you can get ahead if you worked hard. From an early age it was always my dream to operate a business and as I got older thought if I became a Chartered Accountant it may short-cut that path to learning all the necessary skills needed for success. The profession gave me A-grade experience in wide ranging subjects from understanding financials and the relationship between numbers, how to better communicate in all forms, how to use strategic planning to your benefit and to even float a Public Company. With all this valuable knowledge and I'll use the analogy of a Ferrari - it seemed such a waste if you didn't take it out for a spin!

You have said: "To be successful is not a job, rather a way of life." Is the way of life in the construction industry more attractive than an accounting practice?

Yes and no, depending upon your stage in life. When I was 21 the profession was more attractive as I needed to learn the correct skills but today construction is the vehicle for those experiences.

Sure, this industry can be exciting and offer greater

financial leverage than an accounting practice but the dynamics of the two still have a common theme in that they demand you to solve problems. I still chuckle at the naivety of our initial experience in this industry. When setting up Building Solutions (Aust) Pty Ltd we stumbled onto the motto that would define our culture of "Building our reputation on Solutions" we just didn't realise how true those words were to become.

Look, you could believe the stereotype that accountants are boring people but that view was borne out of a working environment from 50 years ago. Today's Chartered Accountant is an intelligent, savvy person that requires them to be an excellent communicator if they are to be successful. A cornerstone of this profession is maintaining your independence – "Without fear, without favour". This principle and adherence to personal ethical rules is something you can't just switch on from time to time if you want to be successful over a long period of time. Secondly I firmly believe that to achieve your career goals requires the assistance and generosity of other people. These people come from all walks of life both professionally and socially and it is this help that has formed my view that being successful is not a job but a way of life.

Building Solutions started as an idea in 2004. Whose idea was it to start the company and what inspired the idea?

In 2002 I felt it would be a good idea to take time out from working life and spent the next 2 years understanding who was David Guille and who he wanted to be tomorrow. I had been carrying this vision that I hoped my life would include owning a country property and in 1996 the Yallingup property came to life. As a hobby I would design various plans then peg them out on the block and upon reflection I wondered if I could turn this passion into a business given the favorable conditions of the economy at that time.

So I had in place, the dream, the theme of creating



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a construction business and all it needed now was the team. It's funny how a simple statement such as “I do” can change your life and when my friend Marcus Kotsoglo said “I'm with you” that's all I needed to hear.

After only a short five-year history, the company now boasts tens of millions of dollars in annual turnover. Did you expect this kind of success when the company started?

Honestly...not really. You can sit down as we did for 3 months solid and prepare a comprehensive business plan but at the end of the day you have to deliver. The reason we had a lesser expectation was that although financially we were solid, we had no management experience or affiliations with other players in this game, no employees or subcontractors and even no clients. We have found over time that by persisting the highlights become more frequent and more significant.

I will say this publicly, I was confident of some measure of success because the best decision I ever made was to choose Marcus as a business partner. His commitment, loyalty, skill and common sense approach to solving problems is first-class and a driving force in the team.

Did winning the MBA's John Roberts Award as the Best New Commercial Builder within five years come as any great surprise or was it expected?

The one factor Marcus and I fear the most is to allow arrogance to dominate our psyche. On many occasions we have seen that attribute bring about poor business decisions, so you could say we were still surprised to hear the announcement on the night. It's probably not entirely correct to say success came in the last 5 years as Marcus and I had spent the previous 20 years gaining experiences and forming relationships that today now bear fruit. We

are extremely proud of the team we have been able to attract which encompasses over 25 employees and 150 core subcontractors and we are just happy the Award publicly pays tribute to their efforts.

Broome Motors is another of your success stories over the last 5 years. Did the establishment of this company present any particular challenges for you assuming that you knew very little about a Motor Vehicle Dealership before you started?

No I think once you have learnt the template to running a successful business, with a little hard work you can apply that to numerous industries. Once again the choice of partner was critical and my brother had demonstrated the ability to be a good Service Manager and wanted to take his career to the next level. It's been a great opportunity to work with Simon and I'm very proud of his achievements. Starting from scratch, today Broome Motors would be the biggest vehicle servicing centre in the Kimberley with franchises in Hyundai and Isuzu Ute's. The Motor Trades Assoc of WA is also proud of our distinction in successfully qualifying 2 Aboriginal mechanics with a further 4 in their final stages of apprenticeship.

Leading such a busy life must take its toll on you personally. What do you do to stay fit enough to cope with the rigours of business life?

Going into business doesn't free up your time – in fact it's the opposite and you have to be prepared to invest a large amount of hard work to be truly successful. That load can get even heavier if you don't have the passion for what you're trying to create. You will spend your whole career seeking to attain that “nirvana” of a balanced lifestyle and rarely does it remain in balance for long. So my advice is that once you have a vision and the goals, make sure you set the rewards as well. **BC**



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