



**FIONA CLARK** SHARES SOME USEFUL STRATEGIES FOR HARD-WORKING BUSINESS OWNERS WHO'RE STRUGGLING TO JUGGLE THEIR BUSINESS AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES.

**R**unning a business is not a perfect work-life balance scenario, where everything is neat and tidy and all goes according to plan. Home life can impact the business, and the business can impact your home life. When things are working smoothly at home, it allows you to be focused on the business. And while this may sound simple to achieve, in reality it's not so easy.

As our lives seem to get busier and busier, there's the constant juggle to manage every moving part. And this is where business and home life can get intertwined. As a business owner you have ultimate responsibility for your company and staff. In addition, there is the pressure to

perform, to be successful, to grow year-on-year, and have employees and their families who rely on you.

From a business aspect, this is a common occurrence. However, then we have other factors, such as the impact of family, which may include looking after children, elderly parents, supporting family members who are ill, travel commitments, community involvement, and more.

I've heard it referred to as the 'Sandwich Generation', where we now have a generation of people caring for their own children and supporting their aging parents at the same time.

This is the reality for a lot of people, including business owners. The difference is, business still needs to continue,

staff still need to be paid, orders still need to be processed, and clients still need to be looked after.

I have had clients over the years who have either had health issues themselves, or significant health issues within their family. It is hard to focus and remain driven to manage or grow a business when there are so many other demands on you physically and emotionally.

Why am I mentioning this? Because statistics show business owners need to start paying attention.

A recent study by MYOB states small to medium business owners face a mental health crisis. According to the tech company's latest Business Monitor snapshot, nearly a third (31 percent) of business owners report experiencing a mental health condition since starting or taking over their business. This doesn't sound like the business dream becoming a reality, instead it seems quite alarming.

Some of the key factors are stress and isolation, particularly for small business owners including 'solopreneurs', and those owners with staff who are expected to appear to have it all together. This can lead to anxiety, depression or burnout.

While there is now more discussion regarding mental health and how it impacts us personally and professionally, there is still the Kiwi attitude of 'she'll be right' to contend with – unfortunately sometimes 'she'll not be right'.

Add to this the long hours of managing a business which can often carry over into family and home life, and it is evident the impact stress may have.

Let's cut to the chase. Being in business is stressful. A bit of stress is a good thing, but when it impacts multiple aspects of your life and starts to be overwhelming – it's time to make some changes.

Here are some strategies to help:

#### • **Prioritise your priorities**

Not everything needs to be done today. Take five minutes in the morning to plan out your day. Keep this to the main tasks and rank them in order of importance from 'A' must be done by 5pm, to 'B' can be done tomorrow if need be, and 'C' needs to be done by the end of the week. Be careful not to have a large complicated 'To Do' list. It is about chunking down key tasks and not overloading yourself.

#### • **Set boundaries**

*For business* – protect your time and learn to say 'no' in a nice way, and ask yourself 'what is best for the business?'. This will help you make decisions on where to spend your time and energy.

*For home* – set boundaries and let family and friends know when you are available or when you have deadlines, on projects that need to be done. Schedule in some downtime or activity on the weekend that you can enjoy. Booking it in will mean it's more likely to happen, and it's important to have something positive to look forward to.

#### • **Don't sweat the small stuff**

Too often we have high expectations and self-imposed stress that does not serve you. Be careful not to get 'paralysis by analysis' and caught up in the minutiae that isn't important to your clients or business.

#### • **Share with your family**

If it is a tough week, or things haven't gone according to plan, share it with trusted friends or family members. It helps them to know what's happening and helps you to talk it through. It can also help to bring another perspective, and potentially find solutions you hadn't considered.

#### • **Celebrate with your children**

You are a great role model. Both as a business owner and parent. When business is going well, make sure to tell your family about it, particularly your children. They notice a lot more than you realise, and it's important to celebrate successes along the way. Take them out for a treat, share with them that 'you've just won a new contract, secured a new client, had a great month etc' and let them see the benefits of working hard and achieving goals. It helps them to feel more positive about the business – they can relate to this – and it's a great way to demonstrate work ethic and the rewards it can bring.

#### • **Make your 'Wish List'**

It's time to reward yourself and enjoy your business. Set yourself a target and a bonus of what 'you' want. This is to be spent on you and is something that you have earned and can then enjoy. It doesn't have to be expensive but must give you motivation, and bring positivity from working hard and receiving benefit from the business in return.

Being in business is one of the most exciting things you can do. There are so many opportunities; you have the ability to build the business you want, decide what markets and clients to work with, and the earning potential is limitless.

I also think we need to look after ourselves, and keep well. When you're strong you are more able to manage stress at work, at home, and feel in control. You are what's most important to your business, so be kind to yourself, reward yourself, and know that work and life isn't perfect – and that's OK. **NZB**



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