



TURNING OPPORTUNITIES INTO WEALTH™

## Leading by Example

### Can you easily recite your organisation's Mission Statement?

No? Not many people can.

Remembering it is hard enough if it's long-winded, but it's even harder if it's not sincere.

Our's is simple... "to fulfill our core purpose while upholding our values", which of course begs the questions: What purpose and what values?

Firstly, our purpose: "to provide holistic financial advice by acting as the 'Chief Financial Officer' for our clients."

When it comes to values – we have six, and everyone in our organisation has a copy of them – usually they are posted on a noticeboard, back of a door or somewhere they can be viewed every day by our team. And they include:

1. We will act with integrity
2. Great reward for great value
3. To deliver with quality and consistency
4. Strive for constant improvement
5. We will maintain a healthy life/work balance
6. To have a harmonious and enjoyable environment

Most business owners would find points 1. to 4. fairly rudimentary, while points 5. and 6. may raise the eyebrows of those who consider them to be more admirable, than realistic.

However, we've long been walking the talk and points 5. and 6. are very much entrenched in our workplace and business ethic.

This is how we're doing it, and please, if you'd like to borrow some of our ideas go right ahead:

### Healthy Body / Healthy Mind

At 5.15pm every Wednesday you'll find us working up a sweat with our personal trainer. On average 15 out of an office of 20 people join our exercise program which is fully paid for by the business – the invitation is extended to partners and spouses.

### Time Off

Christmas is important for everyone, so we close for two weeks and everyone returns fresh and ready to start the new year. While we do work on Nambour Show holiday, we make up for it with a day in lieu which may be used between July 1 and Melbourne Cup – the punters among us really love it.

### Unscheduled Leave Day

Whether the surf's up, it's been a big night out or someone special has turned up unexpectedly, Focus staff know that they may take what we've called an unscheduled annual leave day rather than call in for a 'sickie'. It's an honest approach to taking an unplanned day off – no guilt by the staff member and the boss is happy too!

### Investing in ourselves

We have an annual training budget. Difficult skills are covered every week internally and quarterly, externally. Soft skills training is six monthly. We also encourage staff to pursue training in their particular area or perhaps it's just for personal development paid for by the company - we've never denied a request.

### Study leave

We provide fully-paid study leave for two days per subject and reimburse full tuition costs upon successful completion of post-graduate subjects.

### Fully Documented Procedures

Checklists, work papers, precedent documents – it all sounds a bit dull but our staff love it. Why? Because it gives them clear direction, alleviates confusion and sets standards and benchmarks – everyone knows the expectations, and with a bunch of high achievers on our team, that's important.



We've been working within this type of framework for a couple of years now, and the outcome is a stable workforce populated by happy and engaged staff; recruitment practices which are more about adding team members than replacing them; and as far as our clients are concerned, well – you be the judge.

# Welcome

We've decided that this edition should be dedicated to leadership and how leadership should be conducted at every level – organisational, divisional, team and individual.

"Walking the talk" is our other theme - indeed leadership doesn't exist without it.

To illustrate these ideals, we have put ourselves on the line to reveal that here at Focus we do in fact apply the business principles that we outline to our clients each day.

To coin a well-worn phrase we 'work on as well as in our business'.

We set goals and develop strategies for achieving them.

We have divisionalised our operation so that every aspect of our business is represented from marketing ourselves to ensuring our knowledge and services remain current up to date and effective.

We also constantly work on our administrative procedures to ensure that they are fully functioning and up to date. You would have read recently about our move to a paperless work environment.

Please take a moment now to read about how we're doing all the things we regularly tell you to do along with some information which may help you to avoid common business mistakes.

Yours sincerely,

**The Focus Team**

# The key to success is...

## Knowing why so many small businesses fail

by Glen Palmer, Director.



**Imagine if your business doubled your turnover but for all your efforts you made no more nett profit; or if your business increased your turnover by millions and your profit doubled, but you were nearly bankrupt.**

In both situations – potentially healthy and prosperous businesses very nearly became history.

We stepped in to help and today both businesses are doing very well. A realistic and workable budget was implemented for the first business which has now increased turnover from \$4M to \$10M and has achieved much improved profit levels.

As for the second business, the close call has resulted in a much more realistic understanding of the synergies that exist between expansion and cashflow timing. We worked out a cashflow system that will ride with this company through future expansion.

Over-expansion, over-expenditure and poor operating/accounting systems which impact on cashflow commonly destroy what should otherwise be thriving, growth oriented businesses.

If you are looking to start up a business, expand, introduce a new product line or market; or even if your lease has expired and you are considering moving – talk to us about the impacts, both positive and negative, of your decision making.

Alarming surveys reveal that two-thirds of new businesses survive for at least two years, but within four years, the business survival rate drops to 44 percent.

Why some businesses fail and why some succeed is a matter of debate, although there are common mistakes that can sink a business fast!

Business owners who have experienced a downhill slide will recognise the following, and for those who are enjoying a healthy growing business, take note and recognise the signs so that you remain on the path to prosperity:

- Over-expansion
- Poor Capital Structure
- Over-spending
- Lack of reserve funds
- Business Location
- Poor execution & internal controls
- An inadequate business plan
- Failure to change with the times
- Ineffective marketing and self-promotion.
- Underestimating the competition

If you need advice, solutions, strategies or a sounding board who will provide the voice of reason rather than emotion, please give us a call - our Focus Professional Group business advisors have the experience necessary for guiding businesses to financial success.

# Beyond Comfort Zones

**In 2006, Focus Professional Group implemented an Annual Team Day as part of our personal development program.**

The first step was for everyone to complete a DiSC® personal profile instrument – which is a questionnaire that identifies personality traits and helps explain how different people think and how they are likely to react or behave in different situations.

The second step was to follow up with an event which would put theory into practice.

In something of a ‘baptism of fire’, the Focus team participated in a high ropes adventure course, where they were required to work together in an environment that was completely alien, more taxing and more emotional than their usual situation.

The new-found DiSC® information became an invaluable tool, as groups realised that negotiating the various personality types was the key to their success.

“It was fun, but a pressure-cooker environment with a problem that needed to be solved. It involved a variety of different people and all experiencing different emotions,” Director Rachael Stonier said.

By understanding how each ‘type’ of person was likely to react and



Admiring our work



Tag team

identifying what each could offer, the teams found ways to work together.

Even for this close-knit group, generalised perceptions which had built up over years of working together were exposed. For example, those

who are always relied on to lead, did but the situation soon revealed that leaders have needs too.

For those who are more inclined to stand back, their natural instinct to provide support kicked in, providing valuable and much needed assistance in various forms – practical, emotional and theoretical.

This year, our Team Day built on our DiSC® knowledge and we explored the Six Thinking Hats® by Edward De Bono’s.

“Each of the six hat colours has significance and they remind us to think outside of our normal patterns, to identify opportunities rather than zero in on problems, to be more productive and creative,” Rachael said.

Combined with what the team now knows about one another (DiSC®) it provides an extremely helpful tool that is used daily.

“The impact in our work environment is profound, positively affecting many different aspects of our business, among them recruitment, team member and task allocation, speed and efficiency of problem solving (strategic and administrative) and importantly, we have a heightened understanding of the needs of others - our clients, suppliers and external associates which has improved our communication and customer service standards,” Rachael said.

For information about Six Thinking Hats® go to:  
[www.debonothinkingsystems.com](http://www.debonothinkingsystems.com)

## Introducing New Directors

**It is with pleasure that we announce the appointments of Rachael Stonier and Glen Palmer as directors of Focus Professional Group.**

**Rachael** has excellent credentials and vast experience across many different aspects of professional accounting and business advisory services.

She is a proactive practitioner firmly focused on growth strategies, often considering options outside conventional models to achieve goals for her clients.

In addition to her business advisory role, Rachael is our Focus Professional Group representative for Aged Care Queensland in our role as Industry Partner. Aged Care Queensland is the State’s leading retirement and aged care industry body.

**Glen Palmer** has over 15 years experience working in various accounting practices in Sydney’s CBD. He is a Chartered Accountant and believes he has achieved a balance that blends his academic knowledge with street-smart know how.

He understands the need for plain-English accounting and working proactively with clients to apply sound business models and strategies that deliver planned outcomes.

Previously in the role of Manager in Ashley McGuirk’s team, Glen’s approach is one of partnering and his specialty is very clearly business strategy and advice.

Both Rachael and Glen bring a high level of accounting skill, experience and services which are particularly relevant in today’s business environment and we warmly welcome each to the role of Focus Professional Group Director.



## IN PROFILE

# Sharyn De Silva

## Client Manager



### Sharyn De Silva epitomises our Focus Work - Life Balance program.

She came to us as a mature-age student, studied hard and was supported and mentored by others in our team. She won the CPA prize for excellence for Taxation.

A Senior Accountant, Sharyn is also one of an exclusive group of superannuation specialists in our office.

Her knowledge in this area is extensive gained both from intensive study but also from direct tuition from some of the country's best and most experienced superannuation consultants.

Last year Sharyn took a three month break to travel through Africa and the Middle East.

While she was re-charging her batteries, her client work was disbursed seamlessly to others members of her team. Such is the structure of support in our business.

She returned to us more committed than ever and this year, she has stepped

up to the role of Client Manager, responsible for a portfolio of clients.

This role shoulders a greater level of responsibility and to qualify for it, the runs must be on the board.

By nature, Sharyn is a problem solver. A high achiever.

She is a CPA, has a Bachelor of Business and has special interests in BSA (Building Services Association) compliance and taxation and as mentioned earlier, Self Managed Superannuation Funds.

Having previous experience working in administration, Sharyn also has a strong understanding of book-keeping programs, and particularly enjoys MYOB trouble shooting and solving problems encountered by clients.

As you would expect from someone who travels to far flung destinations, she also enjoys exotic foods – particularly Indian. But then her husband owns Hathi, the Sunshine Coast's best Indian restaurant!

## Home Helpers

### Have you got them covered?

**Many people are now employing an army of occasional workers - gardeners, babysitters, cleaners, an ironing lady... but what you may not understand, is that under some circumstances, the people who help at home may hold you responsible if they are injured performing their tasks.**

A household worker is a person you employ solely in relation to perform tasks in or about your own private home or the grounds of your residence.

For example, a once-a-week cleaner; a once-a-month gardener to do the lawns and trim the hedges; a babysitter who comes every now and then. Maybe you have a holiday home (as opposed to a rental property) and you have a caretaker who does odd jobs for you.

The consequences of not having insurance cover for your household workers can be significant.

If your household worker is injured and makes a claim, you may be liable for their weekly benefits when off work, medical and rehabilitation expenses, together with a penalty of up to 50% of the costs of the claim for failing to have Household workers insurance.

If you have household workers insurance – when the injured person tries to sue, WorkCover will pay for any cost of these damages. In Queensland the cost of Household Worker cover is currently \$17.50 a year!

#### Who is not a household worker?

- A worker who provides service for a fee on your rental properties – e.g. a maintenance man.
- A cleaner when you conduct a business activity in your private residence and your cleaner is employed to clean your entire home – including the business area.

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