



> Wendy Perry

## Blueprint for a better business

Wendy Perry, MD of Workforce Blueprint says to grow a business away from the founder is the best model to achieve any kind of growth

Many business managers understand that the attraction and retention of good staff is of primary importance when seeking to grow a successful business. But Wendy Perry also understands the workforce implications when skills and competencies do not align with strategic business plans.

"Many organisations do not consider the workforce gaps that may occur when planning for their growth and development," she says.

"Workforce Blueprint is a company that helps businesses take stock of their current workforce, build a profile of the desired workforce and analyses where gaps may occur.

"Unlike, say, a financial planner who deals in monetary capital, business owners deal in human capital but often fail to make the same detailed and future-proof plans. Yet there are logical steps that can achieve a customised approach."

Workforce Blueprint – Wendy is the MD – is one of only three companies in SA that provides such detailed and time-effective services. She says the analysis and workforce development strategies are not in the form of traditional training or presentations but interactive discussions that identify issues to be worked on or improved and actioned.

"Much of our work involves a knowledge sharing and 'community of practice' approach

where groups share a common set of issues with a solution based approach," says Wendy.

"This means competitors, say across an industry, can work together on workforce issues because it's about common ground, not competition. There is a great strength to the consultative process but often the strategies have to be translated to an operational level otherwise people may not understand the implementation plan."

Education, communication and collaboration have formed much of Wendy's working life. As a teenage mother, she juggled baby Aimee, work and study to complete her State Government business administration traineeship early. At just 21, Wendy married Scott and at 22 had a second daughter, Jessica. By the time she was 25, Wendy was one of the youngest TAFE Educational Managers in a role developing the organisation's capabilities in traineeships and apprenticeships. She established the first TAFE customer contact industry training centre in the State.

"I was required to build relationships from a TAFE perspective and link with business owners who, potentially, could employ our graduates, trainees and apprentices," says Wendy.

"I was also involved in the marketing of the courses and programs so my skills were being developed in a very practical sense."

It was during this time that Wendy started to think about starting her own business. Seeing her achievements in practice gave her confidence – to a point.

"I was 28 and decided to test the water with my own business while retaining my paid position. I looked at my salary and thought I'd have to earn at least that amount in my own business to make it worthwhile."

Wendy Perry and Associates was launched in September 2002 and Workforce Blueprint in January 2006. Her decision to form another company was, she says, based on the realisation that an eponymously named business would inhibit expansion and that the concept of workforce development and planning was gaining momentum.

"To grow a business away from the founder is the best model to achieve any kind of growth," she says. "I now have eight associates who I have introduced to clients, so the business is not so reliant on me. They are a mix of people with specialist skills so there is a cross transfer of skills."

Wendy says she was encouraged that way by her husband, Scott, a plumber and gas-fitter who was also in business. He advised Wendy that his own business was much too reliant on him and that reading books by authors such as Michael Gerber and Robert Kiyosaki had helped him re-evaluate the efficacy of a self-named business and the shift from a self-employed mindset to business owner.

"Marketing is a key area that needs to be regular, consistent and memorable," Wendy says. "Workforce Blueprint was launched on Magic Millions Race Day, we celebrate with New Year Resolution drinks, send direct mail with 'forget-me-not' seeds inside and candies with our website written on them – all designed to keep our name on the tip of our clients tongue."

"I would have done a few things differently from the beginning, though, such as not saying 'yes' to everything. I could have been more structured, clearer on the products and services I was offering, and documented processes better."

"I have to discipline myself as I'm a creative person so I'm always off on the next thing. However, I do review my business plan regularly as it is a living document, not set in concrete and I'm much better at structure, systems and processes these days."

Wendy says that seeing opportunities early is a great way to carve a niche and become known as innovative, creative and practical, which is exactly how Workforce Blueprint seeks to be viewed.

 **GOLD PAGES Member**  
Training & Development – Page 88