



HOW A JOB INTERVIEW SAVED MY BUSINESS

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I've been going through a mid-life crisis.

At first I thought it was a career crisis, but the issue became that my life (and lifestyle) was inextricably linked to my career choice. How could I move forward with one without compromising the other? Three months ago, the pieces of the puzzle just weren't jiggling for me.

It wasn't that I was unhappy with my career - I love what I do. But I'd lost my buzz, my verve and my get-up-and-go. I'd lost my confidence and motivation. And, for some reason, all of a sudden I needed validation.

Without realising, I was looking to others for direction. I searched for my place. And in my search to find it, I applied for a job.

Filling out the application and updating my resume gave me the most exhilarating rush. I was pumped, and spent the next week eagerly awaiting the response. When the phone call came, I was on a high. There was frantic talk


about putting my son in daycare and how we were going to manage as a family, and I rode the wave right through until the 2.5 hour interview.

About ten minutes in, it hit me - I wanted the validation, but not the job.

Isolation, fatigue and boredom

That interview gave me incredible insight into my headspace at the time, as well as my business. Both were suffering - from isolation, fatigue and boredom. I'd been so busy moving from project to project, focusing purely on meeting deadlines and driving results for clients, that I had failed to look after my business. I had isolated myself from peers, taken no time to recharge and be inspired, and had been fitting my family around work, rather than it being the other way around.

Every liberty that my business provided me, I had been taking for granted. I lacked confidence and



needed someone else to tell me I was good at what I do – I was the handbrake on my own business.

Putting on my big-girl pants

Walking out of that interview knowing that I didn't want the job was a fantastic feeling, but also completely overwhelming. It forced me to stop and reflect on my business. Why had I interviewed? It wasn't about the money, the challenge or the title. It was about me. I needed validation because, in my headspace, I had somehow equated corporate life with success. But this mindset completely undermined what I had been working so hard to build.

I walked out of that interview a changed woman. Why would I choose to work to someone else's agenda when I can write my own? I put my big girl pants on, I looked hard at what I had been avoiding in my business, and I resolved to stop avoiding and start building.

My three biggest stuff-ups in business

Looking back on the past three months, I can clearly see where I dropped the ball. Some of it wasn't deliberate, and some of it was a by-product of my own mindset.

I'd stopped networking and was feeling isolated. For me, networking is a core element of my business. I don't enjoy networking per se, but I do enjoy the friendships I build and the constant learning. I love the engagement. Importantly, networking for me isn't about generating business (that's a great by-product but, truthfully, I don't meet many of my target clients via networking). What it is about is connecting, sharing ideas, propping each other up when we are down, and celebrating wins.

I became overwhelmed with online communities. For me, online communities

started out as a place of learning and development with other industry types. However as someone who has a problem with jumping from idea to idea and following the big shiny object in the room, I spent so much time looking outward that I didn't focus on my business. I watched what others were doing and saying, and got lost in the noise. I had lost sight of my WHY.

Now, I look to those communities as a form of escapism only, and certainly not for validation. They are a great tool for learning and connecting with like-minded business owners who are similarly keen to constantly improve their product offering and the quality of their work, but it stops there.

I lost sight of my own value(s). It wasn't that I had received negative feedback from a client (touch wood) or that I hadn't had the confidence to take on a project. It was that I was comparing myself to others and feeling inadequate, despite being in a completely different niche.

Again, I needed to go back to my WHY. I stopped being reactive – to my mindset, my environment and my perceived value – and started being proactive. I identified my point of difference and worked out the numbers. Statistically, I was delivering results for clients. I was good at my job. This was what I needed.

I also looked at my personal values. I didn't want to wear a suit (I quite like my jeans), nor miss out on the school drop-offs, pick-ups and after-school activities. For that reason, corporate is no longer for me. I lived a different life back then, free from the lure of family. I had little responsibility and was able to give of myself as I pleased. Today, I'm not the same person.

Harriet high-pants It was only by working through the process of what I thought I needed, but decided I didn't want, that I got my head back into the game. Relinquishing my control and putting my future into the hands of others immediately made me appreciate the benefits of what I have. It saved my business.