

WIB CHAT

Proud silverpreneur: Onward and upward for Nan

*Normalising
'normal'
bodies*

*Women set
sights on
State seats*

Our Partners



Silverpreneur shows age no barrier

The Clare Valley's Nan Berrett is proud to call herself a "silverpreneur" and, at a time when most of us are looking to wind down in our working lives, she's busier than ever and continuing to grow her enterprise.

Nan's a wordsmith, and founded her business, Word Solutions, about 10 years ago after resigning from her job as a journalist with the local newspaper.

And, although she's technically "home-based" she offers a very mobile service covering more than 10,000 kilometres throughout regional South Australia and Adelaide each year.

And, even the restrictions of the global pandemic haven't stopped her much.

"I think I've travelled one third around the circumference of the world or something like it this year, according to Google," Nan says.

Nan and her husband have recently bought a caravan too which now also bears the personalised number plate WORDS2, so they can travel together while Nan works, and to ensure their "needy" dog isn't left behind.

"We can travel with the dog, and my husband can come too, and we can actually spend a bit of time going to places together, instead of me on my own."

Nan says her age has been a positive, rather than a negative, when it comes to business.

"No business would actually employ me as an employee, but for some odd reason, the greyer your hair gets, the more desirable you are as a contractor.

"I consult and contract to various business and local governments and it's never been a problem. The older I am, the more respect I get, so, no, I haven't actually had any discrimination."

"The only thing I've noticed is, sometimes with other younger businesswomen, they tend to patronise me a bit, but my clients don't."

Nan encourages employers to consider the value of employing older staff, rather than opting for younger people just because they may be cheaper to employ.

"When you get older, you don't party as hard and I'm well past childbearing, so I'm not going to be off doing that.

"When I was in the workplace, I would tend to come to work even if I didn't really feel like it or didn't feel particularly well.

"You soldier on as an older person, you're much more reliable. But employers don't actually get that. They don't seem to understand the value of an older employee."



PROUDLY REGIONAL: Clare Valley convener for the Women in Business Regional Network Nan Berrett with her finalist's certificate in the Regional category of the 2021 SA Woman awards.

Word Solutions isn't Nan's first business. Although being employed throughout her working life, she has always maintained a side hustle or two. Her side hustles in the past have included owning a gift shop, a health food shop and doing direct sales.

Her latest business is the first she's run while not also being employed elsewhere.

"This is my best life. Honestly, best third life ever. Being on my own, calling my own shots, not being beholden to an employer.

"Workplaces traditionally can be quite fraught with tension of various sorts at various times, and you're always, sort of, at the bidding of someone else. I'm completely in control of my own destiny now.

"I can choose my own clients. If I don't get on with someone, then I can shuffle them to someone else who they may get on better with.

"I can choose my working hours. If I want to work late at night, I can do that and sleep in the morning. It's just fabulous."

And, although today Nan comes across as confident and knowledgeable, it wasn't necessarily the situation when she resigned from her job.

"When I left work I didn't actually think I had any portable skills," Nan recalls.

"And so, I was actually looking at winding down towards retirement; not that that was something I was looking forward to, because I don't have any hobbies, so there wasn't anything to move on to.

"I had an opportunity to start my own business, and I started it through

NEIS (the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme)."

Calling upon skills she'd learned in social media while at the newspaper, and her experience with computing and technology, as well as her reputation as a journalist, Nan snared her first client, the local council, after announcing her resignation.

"So that started the ball rolling. I think we were one of the first rural/regional councils in South Australia to have an active social media page, a Facebook page.

"I started off their social media and I began doing media releases and one thing led to another, and now I do a diverse range of jobs for them.

"It's quite surprising, all sorts of things pop up. So the council became my first client and they're still a client."

Training has been a key component in Nan's business and personal development over the past 10 years.

The roll-out of the nbn network, and the associated Federal Government funding to assist small business to make use of it, provided opportunities for training.

"I linked in with the Polaris Centre at Mawson Lakes, who are just fantastic. I must have gone to at least a dozen small business workshops on using the internet for good, and not for evil. And I built on my knowledge of social media and marketing.

"And whenever the chance comes up for me to learn more, I will just put my hand up and go off and learn new things.

"I'm a pretty much an advocate of lifelong learning.

"I also believe that if you're

to business

in business and you are providing information to clients you never know it all. It's a bit arrogant to assume that you know it all and that you're unwilling to adopt additional training."

Nan says she even takes advantage of training sessions on topics she thinks she already knows.

"I often find things out that I hadn't known before. So, I always pick up new knowledge, and if I don't pick up a lot of new knowledge, I always pick up validation that what I know is still current. I think that's important."

Nan is proud of the fact that her business has been built organically through networking and referrals, rather than by spending money on advertising.

"And I'm always learning things from the businesswomen that I have contact with."

"There's always something new that comes up. It's fabulous. I love the fast pace of our current modern world. It's really interesting. It keeps you on your toes."

Nan's connection with the Polaris Centre in the early days has now also come full circle with Nan now also conducting workshops and sharing her knowledge under contract to them.

And she has also recently been touring many of the Women in Business Regional Network chapters sharing her knowledge and experience of effective networking and has been conducting workshops for the University of Adelaide in Whyalla.

Nan is also a mentor with the Adelaide Business Hub through the Federal Government's Small Business Advisory Services Digital Solutions Program.

"So there's a whole group of mentors with different skill sets and we provide support for clients in the small business community, which is again funded by the Federal Government."

And, she recalls how she gained the role through networking.

"I got that role back in 2018 when I was at a business conference and I stepped outside the conference because the topic was of no interest to me at all, so I thought, I'll pop out and have a coffee in the foyer."

"Another conference attendee was also doing the same thing and we struck up a conversation. It turned out that she managed the program at the Adelaide Business Hub, we exchanged business cards and had a bit of a chat."

"And then she went back to her office and spoke to her CEO, saying she had met me, and just happened that her manager had been talking to a colleague of mine and my name had come up in their conversation."

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Build your reach online

Many small to medium businesses have a website or some online presence. It's probably not enough.

Why not? Because more than likely, you probably don't have the time or the inclination to do it well yourself. Typically, you've paid the money or invested the time in your website and maybe you think it should be doing its job for you. It's probably hard to see tangible results; marketing seems expensive and not worth it, and your time and money is used elsewhere, so it goes on the backburner.

To keep your content current and interesting you absolutely need consistent, quality, unique, well curated photography, videography, branding, packaging and online presentation.

A boring, outdated website, branding, product imagery and repetitive, sporadic, or poorly planned social media is likely to sit in the dark.

Just consider for a moment the reach of your online sales based on your existing loyal customers on your Facebook page, and the number of likes and shares achieved when you post material about your product.

Consider how many people follow your page versus how many likes and shares you achieve organically. Now consider how many more potential buyers you will be able to touch if you drop your products into a few different pools (sales platforms).

By using a platform's existing reach, the potential of those ripples spread much further and wider. With a consistent and well considered approach, your product's reach could become much, much greater and all new customers.

All products and brands need to present as attractive with competitive pricing, good imagery, distinctive branding, an engagement story and quality and unique content to catch and hold the attention. Most importantly, your online presence needs to catch interest and secure the trust of the buyer in an instant - or you've lost them!

The key to success is to know your buyer, what they look like, why they buy, how to communicate with them and on what platform, how they use



With Teresa McLuckie
TRACE Foodsteps

Marketing

your product, and how often they use it. This is where good planning and research, and deep analytics and a flexible approach comes into play as very important tools for informing the success of your product campaigns and marketing strategies.

As an owner of two different food businesses, a content creation business and an eCommerce marketing business, I am a food and flavour designer, I develop as well as curate food products, I design my own labelling and innovate with packaging using my food industry resources, and choreograph SM (Social Media) marketing and material. I have two international eCommerce shop fronts and three local. I am a content creator and have a photography studio fully kitted out with green screen, lighting and equipment for product imagery.

My videography business partner and I provide commercial video production services supported by our state of the art editing equipment and a plethora of 4k-6k camera equipment.

We have a lot of fun choreographing stunts with food and products, creating videos, and putting together sound ... I thrive on anything visually and digitally creative, right down to building websites from scratch.

We are also well networked with all the right people in the industry, from radio and sound producers, to SA TV & film production, film directors, access to actors and models, to graphic designers and editors.

[Click for Trace Foodsteps: our South Australian Food Stories](#)

I am the person for branding, (food) product development, packaging and labelling, and provide consulting for local and Asian eCommerce, SM and SEM.



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Regional stalwart and wordsmith

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"So having my name come up twice, motivated them to contact me and see if I'd be interested in becoming a mentor and workshop presented in that programme."

Nan says working alone hasn't always been a smooth ride, as it raises a number of challenges.

"It's getting your head around working alone. I said that I really like my lifestyle so I can work late at night and sleep in the morning, but, in actual fact, you've got to be a lot more disciplined when you work alone.

"When you work in an office it's kind of a given, you're coming in at a certain time. You do the work once you're there and you've got colleagues to support you if you need it. At home alone, you're on your own.

"And actually, if you feel like having a lie-in, that sounds like bliss, but in actual fact, what happens is that you think, oh my God, I'd better get up because I've got stuff to do.

"So you have to be fairly disciplined in your working day and how you fit things in, because there is a bit of a tendency to say, because I work for myself, I can take time off. I can go out to lunch. I can do this and that.

"But then if you do that, you've got to fit in your commitments at other times, so that can be a bit stressful."

Although you wouldn't know it to meet her, Nan describes herself as an introvert, who likes her own company, so working alone isn't as big a challenge as it is for an extrovert.

As in many businesses in regional areas, technology connectivity has also been a challenge. When the nbn was being rolled out Nan was on ADSL.

"There's a lot of draw on my service in the little community where I live. And so, when the kids got out of school around four o'clock, the draw on the internet was fairly high and I used to lose service or everything would be buffered and slow.

"So, when I got the nbn - I have it via fixed wireless - that was a huge improvement. There's a tower across from me, across the hill, and it transmits to a little dish on top of my house. And on windy days or stormy days, there can be a little bit of an inhibition to the signal coming across. So there's still a bit of buffering, and my speeds are not quite the same as you get in the townships."

And this has been more obvious with increasing use of Zoom to connect with clients.

While most of us are contemplating succession planning in our businesses to wind down for a quieter semi-retirement, Nan is facing an unexpected



HER OFFICE: Nan can often be seen working and meeting clients at local cafes.

further challenge ... how she keeps up with an increasingly busy and growing business.

"The other struggle I've been having is just workload. As my business grows, I'm looking to try and hand off some of my work, but the decision as to what you hand off and what you can bear to hand off, because having done it all by myself for so long, I don't really want to let anything go.

"But I must, and trying to find somebody to do that for me and find the right people at the right price is a challenge. I'm a bit anal about it. My name is behind everything that I produce, so I need to make sure it's right.

"There's a difference between obsessively checking everything and being able to let go and have a bit of trust."

And, although she's managed to resist retirement so far, Nan knows her busy lifestyle can't continue forever.

"I need to work on an exit strategy to a certain extent. And for that purpose, I have got or create SOPs (standard operating procedures) all the time, for all the things that I do.

"I have documents that I update for my regular clients, so I send them to them every six months, updated with the procedures surrounding the work that I do for them, so if I should fall over, they can pass that stuff on to someone else.

"It doesn't matter what age you are, you could be 100 or 20, it's the same. You could be run over by a bus or die of old age, but you still need to plan so you don't leave anyone in the lurch if you're unable to continue your work.

"I don't have specific thoughts on retirement because I really love what I do, and apart from being an avid reader, I don't have hobbies.

"So, if I stop work tomorrow, I'd probably curl into a ball somewhere and read myself to death, because I have absolutely nothing in my life that I would say would amuse me as a hobby or interest, outside of my family and friends.

"On a day-to-day basis, I don't have anything that would interest me long enough to make me think it's worth getting up in the morning. Right now, I want to get up every day."

And, with that in mind, Nan has the following advice for anyone nearing retirement age who doesn't see themselves as wanting to retire.

"If you're thinking about retiring and can't bear the thought of bowls, or golf, or long ladies' lunches and you really want to do something that will enrich your own life, then go for it.

"Just look for your strengths and build on that and start a business on a small scale using the strengths that you have and then seek out as much support as you can.

"There is heaps of it about. There's lots of government programs, lots of low cost or no cost programs, and learnings and teachings in online courses that don't cost very much.

"There are many ways to pick up knowledge join organisations like the Women in Business Regional Network, which is a fantastic network for meeting other women who have all started business journeys similar to each other.

"Really, there's nothing unique in starting a business journey. What's unique is the way you do your business, I suppose. Talk to people, as people are so keen to help you. No one ever shies away from offering help if you ask them."

Nan says a secret to her business's success has also been the fact that she has low overheads - working from home, using her own computer, camera and phone.

And, in terms of the future of the business, she has her eyes set on some new projects, including an online course of her own and some new workshops to deliver in 2022 ... and she'd like to get some more staff resources to help make that happen.

The course is expected to be about managing time and stress, while the workshops will focus on journaling.

The year will also be big for Nan's role as the Clare Valley convenor for the Women in Business Regional Network with monthly events being planned for 2022.

Find out more about Nan Berrett her business Word Solutions and government-subsidised mentoring she offers at <https://www.wordsolutions.com.au/>.