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Women's business

From an idea to a profitable reality, these women are taking the lead in making their businesses a success.



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From little things . . .

Jessica Leo
Editor CareerOne

A DESIRE to go one better and take matters into their own hands has led to professional success for these five women. With their careers spanning the finance, arts, and care sectors, these women share more than just gender - all have started their own businesses, from the ground up.

And for the most part, the catalyst for branching out on their own stemmed from personal experiences or observations.

This was certainly the case when it comes to Tanya Cole who, 11 years ago and dissatisfied with nanny services for her children, started up NannySA.

Now one of the state's largest nanny agencies, the business has branched out into nanny training and childcare recruitment - but it began with one goal: to do better.

"Many working parents strive for work/life balance, but in reality this is hard to achieve," Ms Cole says.

"As a working mother I had hired nannies to help me care for my own children, but not once did an agency worker come to see me," Ms Cole says.

"When I started NannySA my point of difference was meeting with every family in their home."

And it's this attention to detail which has led to the business's success. NannySA now employs more than 240 nannies, carers and childcare workers servicing families and childcare centres across the state and recently opened an office in Port Augusta.

Similarly, attention to detail was key for Tammy May when starting up her award-winning business MyBudget.

Now branching into Melbourne and recruiting staff for MyBudget's Victorian operations, Ms May says the business began after she noticed how few people knew how to manage their money.



START SMALL: Richelle Brookman, Tammy May, Peggy Barker, Virginia Bullock and Tanya Cole grew their businesses from the ground up. Pictures, cover and above: **MATT CARTY**

"I was working at a solicitor's firm which had an internal debt collection agency," she explains.

"I saw a lot of people in debt and that a lot of people didn't know how to manage that debt."

And so, from an office space in Warradale, MyBudget was born. While the business began with Ms May running around Adelaide physically clients' bills and debts, the birth of her first child brought her business plan into focus.

"I think the biggest eye-opener for me was when I had my daughter," she says.

"When I came (back from maternity leave) I was able to focus on the business (rather than day-to-day operations.)"

Balancing motherhood and one's own business has also proved a challenge for Richelle Brookman of Arts Asia Pacific.

With a five and a half month old

People have to have the courage to make a change and commit to that.

baby at home and two Australian productions in the pipeline - namely *Metro Street* (which premiered in Adelaide earlier this month) and *Avenue Q* (debuting in Melbourne on June 4) finding a balance is at times difficult.

Ms Brookman began her career working at a top Sydney law firm but, she then discovered the lure of the arts world, taking a pay cut to gain an entry-level position in the industry. She hasn't looked back

since. Her advice for anyone else wanting to start a business is to follow a similar path: start at the bottom and work up.

"Don't think you're stuck in a rut, whether it's looking into night-time courses or something else, invest some time in changing careers.

"People have to have the courage to make a change and commit to that."

Peggy Barker of Barker Wealth Management is another woman in business who is well equipped to deal with both career changes and challenges.

A former upper-atmosphere scientist, Ms Barker was living on a sheep station near Burra when financial analysis became more than just a hobby and ultimately spawned her business.

"When the children went to school, analysing the financial markets took up my time," Ms Barker

says, adding that she and her late husband were headhunted by a Sydney financial planning firm before then branching out into their own practice.

But starting up Barker Wealth Management wasn't all plain sailing, with some issues to overcome.

"The biggest risk at that time was exposure to liability and starting from scratch with no cash flow," she recalls.

But now, employing around 14 people and facing new challenges in a tight economic market, Ms Barker couldn't be happier with where she's at.

"The key is to love what you do and do the right thing by your clients," she says.

Once again, it was that desire to do the best possible job that also led Virginia Bullock to start up her own business, Home Support Services.

Now providing in-home care for more than 20,000 South Australians each year, Ms Bullock founded the business 20 years ago after working as a nurse and then caring for her father when he was diagnosed with cancer.

Ms Bullock says seeing both young children and adults in hospital led her to devise her business to allow patients to recuperate in the comfort of their own homes.

"People find their recovery is very much escalated (when at home), they don't have the illness mentality and their loved ones don't have the disruption of having them in hospital," Ms Bullock explains.

After expanding into Queensland the business employs more than 300 staff, but in getting to this point, Ms Bullock had to deal with being diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I was very ill for about a year and I discovered what it feels like to be sick and how being at home is so important, you don't feel as disempowered.

"It was a very valuable life lesson," Ms Bullock says.