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Huw and Janette

A decade is a long time, but in Forever Living it is a split second – or that’s how it seemed to Soaring Managers, Huw and Janette...

What was life like before Forever?

Just over ten years ago we were highly paid directors in the newspaper industry; we loved our work and income, but it was no life. In spite of the stimulating pressure and daily excitement of the media industry, we knew we had to do something different, but we had no idea what, and no intention of taking any kind of risk with so many financial and family obligations – we had seen so many ‘great ideas’ fail as businesses.

How did you discover Forever?

There were, in reality, two discoveries: the opportunity itself, and the realisation of the enormity of what we had stumbled across. Both discoveries sprung from a small, interesting-looking advert we’d seen in a local newspaper. We were, of course, cautious; at first we did not like the concept or the business model, and we had no interest at all in the products, but there was something special about the person to whom we were talking. John was charming, did not take himself too seriously, modest, but most of all he seemed highly interested in us, and that’s what clinched it.

We could see an ‘escape route’ with little risk; the only obligation on us was to put in some effort, which we were already doing in so many other areas. What was music to our ears was that we would be able to build our new business at a pace that suited us, and we could change that pace whenever we liked. And that, really, is all we’ve done! We worked at a rate that suited our priorities and commitments at the time. The demands on our lives and our family may have changed constantly, but the business and income continued to grow.

What activities did you put in place to help develop your business?

Our former roles were built around deadlines and urgency, and these were two key aspects we made sure were in place with our teams. But, like most successful ventures – in business or sport for example – we knew that a consistent work rate was key. We also knew – from working all around the UK in various newspaper centres – that although there will always be local challenges and hurdles (changing competition and pricing etc.), enthusiasm and sustained effort will always produce good results. So while we, and our growing teams, had to learn new skills, beneath it all we’d set step-by-step goals and then simply get to work. We were also experienced enough to know, in advance, that everything was not always going to go to plan; realising this in advance allows you to prepare mentally and ensure a contingency plan is in place. If there was something we got very wrong at the outset, it was that it took us far too long to shake off our hang ups about our previous industry; we needed to just accept that our sponsors, and the people around us, wanted to help for the most positive and pure reasons.

You are ADDs for Wales; what does this role entail?

In 2011 Bob Parker invited us to become ADDs in Wales. It was a compliment and a significant challenge. We needed to make sure we could give enough attention to our own business and tackle the impression held by some that ‘you cannot build a business in Wales’. Fire on my skin. Over the last few years the area has enjoyed incredible growth, and at one point (May 2013 to November 2014) we were Top UK Area for eighteen consecutive months – this was all down to the work, effort and sheer excitement that FBOs in Wales have generated. Our role in all this has simply been to ‘oil the wheels’; to ensure there is a culture of achievement, an exciting environment, and that everyone feels valued and important.

What key advice do you give members of your team?

At the outset, ‘setting our own pace’ was critical for us, and it is important we make sure that same condition is in place for the very special people in our group. For them it is not our pace, or the pace we may want for them, but the pace that is good for them. You cannot force it – but just watch what happens when you help them achieve those first few goals in their plans!

Would you change your journey at all?

Now looking back we shudder to think what our lives would have been like if we had not grasped that chance to give us our lives back. Was it easy? No. Did we make sacrifices along the way? Yes. Did every day go to plan? No! Was it worth it? An overwhelming, yes! Our lives are now so different and so much better, and we still have an exciting view of the future and of all the things we can now give to our children and grandchildren – and of course, ourselves. Forever has definitely turned out to be the thing we never knew we always wanted!



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