

GROW YOUR BUSINESS:

DR Fitness

Grow your Business features fitness professionals sharing their personal journey of growing their business. Here, *Heather Smith* talks to Duncan Rennie, founder of DR Fitness, based in Sydney's Inner West.

Heather Smith ▶ Can you tell me a little about your business?

Duncan Rennie ▶ In 2005 I founded DR Fitness as a part-time outdoor personal training business, while I continued to work in other roles within the fitness industry. It finally reached the point in 2008 where I had too many clients to accommodate part-time, so I made the leap into being 100 per cent committed to my own business – which incidentally coincided with us opening our studio in Sydney's Inner West. Our primary business has always been one-on-one personal training, however we also offer boot camps, corporate fitness services and comprehensive health and fitness screens/assessments.

Heather Smith ▶ It is a big decision for a small business to take on its first employee – what made you think it was the right time?

Duncan Rennie ▶ I needed to either cut back on sleep (that I already wasn't getting) or I needed to take someone on to share the load. My plan was to give all new enquiries to the new employee, so I could build up their client base while making my own more manageable. If any of my established clients moved out of the area or couldn't continue training, I didn't replace them on my own training roster; *all* new clients went to the new employee. To me, it's the only way to

grow. It's a slow journey, but while I'm still doing more face-to-face hours than I would like, I am in a far better position now than when I took on my first employee, in February 2009.

Heather Smith ▶ Who did you seek advice from about taking on your first employee?

Duncan Rennie ▶ I sought advice from a whole range of people; Justin Tamsett (www.justintamsett.com) has been a mentor and an employer. I am a member of the Australian Personal Trainers Round Table (www.roundtables.com.au) where business owners with a wide range of experiences within the personal training industry meet and discuss their business. I also asked a few people outside of our industry what they went through when expanding their businesses as I think that some external insight can be a good idea.

Heather Smith ▶ Was the process easier or harder than you expected?

Duncan Rennie ▶ It matched my expectations. Perhaps that's because my previous job was as a personal training manager at a gym where I was responsible for a lot of the hiring, firing and training. I have always subscribed to the opinion that you shouldn't be a manager or do a job unless you have done most of the jobs of the people that you are managing. I didn't go into it with my head in the sky thinking 'this will be easy, I'll just get someone'. It's really tough. I can't emphasise enough the importance of spending time on the employment process. From an employer's perspective, you have a lot of people to choose from, but unfortunately many of them aren't up to the standard you will be looking for in your personal training studio. So I think the big thing for us is the recruitment process – getting the right person while understanding that no one person is perfect.

Heather Smith ▶ How did it affect your cashflow?

Duncan Rennie ▶ Our trainers are casual employees with variable hours; if they train someone and they do sessions for us then they get paid. The only initial cash outlay is the hours they work



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and the cost of putting an ad on SEEK. Initially the big cost is time. We find the right person, we take them on and then we invest time in our in-house training modules. Although a lot of people might be perfect for being a personal trainer and have learnt all the theory, they lack hands-on experience. We give them lots of intense practise and role play, until we are confident that they are able to work with clients and do the job really well.

Heather Smith ▶ **What do you know now that you wish you had then?**

Duncan Rennie ▶ I now know that you will never know everything when employing someone. Fortunately everyone is different, and that's the beauty of it because you get different personalities in your workplace. At the end of the day you have got to go with gut feeling. In our recruitment ads we say that experience is not essential; we don't need that, we need the right attitude, the right personality and emotional intelligence because you can never train these into someone. These things are important because ours is a people industry. If you don't

get along with your trainer, no matter how well they train you, you're not going to stick around.

Heather Smith ▶ **What advice would you give to other small business owners?**

Duncan Rennie ▶ Take your time. When you open your own business and find yourself wearing so many hats – marketing manager, admin manager, office manager, cleaner, laundry – in addition to being a trainer, it can be very tempting to hire someone quickly. My advice is to take your time and employ based on attitude; accept that it may take longer to train them up, but if they have got the right attitude they will be better for your business in the long run. **■**

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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TIPS

Tax Rate Tables

Tax Rate Tables, used to calculate the PAYG tax, are issued by the ATO for each financial year. The ATO sends out paper copies, there is a tax calculator on their website and the tax tables are incorporated into the latest release of MYOB Accounting payroll software.

SGC Superannuation

Employees eligible to choose their superannuation fund need to be provided with a Superannuation Choice Form, and the employee needs to sign a form to say they have received it from their employer. The business must have a default superannuation fund, and if an employee does not want to select their own, the SGC (Superannuation Guarantee Charge) super is paid into it.

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Heather Smith

Heather is on a mission to improve the financial literacy of business by empowering business owners to produce accurate and meaningful management reports in a timely manner. She is a commerce graduate, an ambassador and fellow of the ACCA, a MYOB Certified Consultant, a writer and keen advocate of technology and social media. For more information, visit www.aniseconsulting.com, email info@aniseconsulting.com or tweet T:@MYOBTrainer

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