

Home Business Forum.

With more and more people struggling to juggle that all important work-life balance these days, many are choosing to run their businesses from home. Pix Jonasson and Barbara Smith introduce us to the Home Business Forum, and explain how it can help you as a home-based business operator ...

Introduce yourselves to our readers ...

Pix: After working for the Victorian and NSW Governments for nearly 20 years, I decided to 'bite the bullet' and enter the public arena. After attending the World Internet Summit in Sydney in March 2008, I started my own home-based business, Success Dynamics Group, while living in Mildura. In 2009, as a newly single mum of two children, Sam and Katie, I relocated to Port to be closer to my family, with my beautiful mum and my beloved late dad having lived here since 1993 and other family on the east coast.

As Founder and CEO of Success Dynamics Group, an educational, motivational, training and consulting business, I have developed the MENTORS Method of Success© and am committed to providing excellent multi-media courses, events, information and training to people to enable them to achieve their success. I am also Director of Pix International Pty Ltd, Founder of My Speaker Site and On Target Marketing System.

In September, I hosted the inaugural White Balloon Day at Panthers (thanks Russ!), raising awareness and funds for survivors of child sexual assault. My latest project is the Oxley Highway Community Celebration, working in conjunction with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and Roads & Maritime Service.

Barb: I've been lucky enough to have worked in 3 countries. My career background has included being a Legal Conveyancer, Personal Assistant to the CEO of one of Australia's largest companies, a Qantas Flight Attendant, an Office Manager, a PC Support/Help Desk Officer; a lecturer for Travel & Tourism/Computers for the William Blue Hotel Management School and a Director of my own training company.

The last 14 years I have been spent in the computer industry, where I have worked on mainframe computers, Novel networks, Microsoft products and trained staff in Computer Aided Dispatch for the emergency services in Australia and the United States.

In 1989 I bought a franchise management business, and my company successfully trained over 2,000 people in human behaviour change. I was a Director of the company, achieving the highest sales for the southern hemisphere. I have had several radio and TV appearances and presented many talks to a variety of community groups. I have written articles for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Successful Selling*.

Because of my involvement as a volunteer in the Olympic movement, I was asked in November 2001 by the IOC (International Olympic Committee) and United States Olympic Committee to present a paper at the First World Conference on Olympic and Sport Volunteering in New York City. In December 2001, I was invited to Switzerland and had a private meeting with the new IOC President, Dr Jacques Rogge, to

discuss sport volunteering in Australia.

I have continued my love of study and have completed my MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist) exams and gained a Certificate IV in Workplace Training & Assessment.

I moved to Port in 2006 after I was diagnosed with Stage IV Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and my husband Laurie and I thought the lifestyle might help me live longer – well it certainly has done that, as I am now in remission. I currently run my own computer-training consultancy called The Roving Trainer and teach over 30 different courses and assist my clients as their own personal computer coach. I have trained over 3,000 people in how to get more from their computer.

My husband, Laurie, is the Author of *Living is Giving – the Volunteer Experience* and a recipient of the Order of Australia Medal. Along with Laurie, we have part-time fostered 8 children through the Aunties & Uncles child mentoring program. We enjoy swimming and volunteering.

What exactly is the Home Business Forum?

Pix: The Home Business Forum was founded about 5 years ago by a few adventurous entrepreneurs who wanted to have a forum specifically for home based business people.

The HBF provides an environment where home based businesses operating in the Port Macquarie - Hastings area meet in a friendly, relaxed environment. Members support each other through utilising services, becoming alliance partners or providing referrals.

Each meeting, a guest speaker is invited to present as a specialist in their field. Topics covered are a must see for any home business owner. The Home Business Forum is auspiced by the Port Macquarie Community College and commenced in 2007.

What are your roles with the Forum?

Pix: I joined the HBF Committee in March 2011, and my role is 'Speaker Seeker'. I am involved in finding and liaising with appropriate Speakers on a variety of topics suited to home-based businesses. At our recent Forum, we had the awesome (what else would I say!) Jay Beaumont speak about 'How To Grow A Successful Start Up Business'.

We have an amazingly talented and entrepreneurial Committee consisting of: Acting President / Secretary – Colin Imer, Sensible Sales Solutions; Membership Secretary – Barbara Smith, The Roving Trainer; Meeting Manager – Vicki Carnes, Victoria's Modelling Agency; Marketing/Minute Secretary – Alana Farr, Alfa Virtual Business Services; Finance Fundraising – Glenda Hamilton, Perfectly Organised and also Acting Treasurer; Grants & Newsletter – Liz



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Paine, Learning Insight; IT – Zoe Pogonowski, XYZ Support.

Roughly how many businesses operate from home in Australia these days?

Pix: There are nearly one million people operating a business from home in Australia today ... that's 64% of all businesses!

What are the primary aims of the Home Business Forum, and how can it help the average person?

Pix: SUPPORT: operating a business from home has its downfalls and special problems, such as isolation and finding relevant mentors and support people. The forum meetings are always informative and provide great support.

NETWORKING: business owners who operate from home have the opportunity to meet and network with like-minded individuals who face the same challenges on a daily basis. Networking is a great way to build alliances, mentors and clients.

LEARNING: home Based Business Operators may find it difficult to access business information resources, including business planning and management advice. The Home Business Forum bases their meetings around guest speakers who are experts in their field. Attendees are encouraged to contribute.

How do Forum members network with each other? Are there regular meetings or a website, for example?

Barb: We have 5 Forums a year, and they are bi-monthly. The website is: www.homebusinessforum.org.au

The next meeting is Friday 24 February 2012, Venue TBC, 9.30am – 12.30pm, Speaker TBC.

Having a longer meeting means we are really able to have interactive sessions and workshop many

ideas that are not possible at a business breakfast, when people may have to rush off at 8.30am. This gives our members important time to spend on their business, with a brains trust available. Sometimes other people can see solutions to our business, as they do not have an emotional involvement in our business.

What's been the most valuable part for you both personally through being members?

Pix: Other than the great networking opportunities, I have developed my leadership and communication skills. As a proud mother, I know all about the challenges of combining a career and a home-based business with raising children on my own. HBF has been so supportive of my and my family's needs. Thanks gang.

Additionally, I have learnt so much about topics and issues of concern to home-based businesses; ironically, many of which are applicable to traditional retail businesses e.g. social media, tax, cash flow, outsourcing.

Barb: HBF is ideally suited to supporting solo entrepreneurial men and women to either remain working at home, or even to expand their business to incorporate staff and premises if they wish.

Personally, I have learnt how to be a better leader, and being on the committee I have gained valued insight in how to run a Forum successfully, how to delegate tasks and how to work as a team to help each other; and in turn, that has helped me and our members.

Where can people find out more information?

Barb: Further information can be obtained from: www.homebusinessforum.org.au or by contacting: Barbara Smith, Membership Secretary on 0410 420 799. membership@homebusinessforum.org.au

Thanks Pix and Barb.

Interview by Jo Atkins.

Photo: Pix Jonasson (L); Barbara Smith (R).