

MY WEEKLY

PREVIEW

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ISSUE 810 MAY 30, 2024

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MY WEEKLY
PREVIEW



salt

Your Time

CELEBRATING Women in Business



Females of all ages are making their mark across the Sunshine Coast in a diverse range of industries. So many inroads have been made over the decades to smash the glass ceiling and break down gender-based barriers to success. This week, we bring you the second edition of our inspirational feature, shining the spotlight on some of the region's brightest stars.

The Sunshine Coast has no shortage of exemplary business women – a sisterhood blazing a trail for our younger generation to follow and look up to. Here at Sunshine Coast Publishing, we are a predominantly female team who are passionate about uplifting, empowering and supporting each other to ensure we deliver a suite of products we can all be proud of.

We are fortunate to have a great support system in our region, including the Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network, whose members are driven to empowering women and celebrating their achievements in business.

Whether you are a seasoned entrepreneur, freelancer, corporate professional or just starting your business journey, the network is instrumental in helping like-minded business women to connect and thrive.

From real estate to law, psychology to health and aesthetics, the backgrounds of the women in this special second edition is remarkable. Their journeys are not just tales of success but also testament to the determination, passion and unwavering commitment to their craft and being the best in their fields.

Whether they are breaking barriers in traditionally male-dominated fields or launching passion-driven businesses that make a difference, these women are demonstrating that success knows no gender bounds.

We uncover their challenges, triumphs and the unique perspectives they bring to a diverse and vibrant business community in our region. Get ready to be inspired and motivated by these extraordinary women who are helping to shape the future of our region.

Thanks to the amazing participants in our Women in Business feature:

- Century 21 on Duporth
- Pathway Legal
- KLM Solicitors
- Network HQ
- Aitken Legal
- Home Sunshine Coast
- Greenhalgh Pickard

ON THE COVER: Seated: Shannon Dawes, Ingrid Nelson. Middle row: Angie Holmes, Danielle Bussa, Shirley Sinclair, Shona Smith, Caitlin Zerafa, Carissa Matthews, Bethan Eaton, Leanda Grambower. Standing: Heidi Birdsall, Kath Hawkins, Morgan Earney. Missing: Dianne Olson, Tina Olson, Candice Holznagel, Karen Le Breton, Melissa Hourigan, Vicky Sheridan, Sue Foster, Janine Hill, Michelle Austin, Sarah Hillman, Anita McEwan.



Abbey Charlton is responsible for the internal and client relations at Greenhalgh Pickard. Alongside this, she leads Eco Brand Marketing as its director, guiding the creation, advancement and implementation of strategic marketing endeavours.

What inspired you to enter your field of work? – I always say I simply fell into marketing. However, when I reflect on my life, my love of writing, analysis and creativity, marketing and business success was always on my trajectory. I have always believed that if you love what you do, you will never classify work as just a 'job'.

Can you share your journey to becoming a successful businesswoman on the Sunshine Coast? – I am a strong believer that every position I've undertaken has been a stepping-stone to equip me with the adequate skills to excel in my next chapter, both professionally and personally. I'm lucky enough to have been empowered through the workplaces I've been a part of and fundamentally these skills have been transferable across all industries I've worked at and the businesses we get to be involved with today.

How do you balance the demands of your work/personal life? – Work/life balance is essential as you need to give your best self to your work. I have scheduled breaks throughout the year, work a nine-day fortnight and prioritise things that are beneficial for my mental and physical health. Keeping active and having exercise to start the day is a non-negotiable.

What initiatives or support networks are important for empowering and encouraging women in business on the Sunshine Coast?

– Particularly being within the legal and business industry, women need to advocate for their place to be heard and to challenge the norm. There is a large community of women in professional and creative services on the Sunshine Coast that I regularly connect with to share ideas, form

connections and show support for. I believe that creating the opportunity for conversation gives women the space to be confident about their successes, share experiences and grow as professionals.

What has been your biggest achievement in business to date? – Starting the marketing company from an organic evolution of marketing for various clients. This was such a momentous step in my career and to be able to put this into fruition has been incredible.

What excites you the most about your industry? – The opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, to build a business that enables brands and businesses to express their values and share their message. It's exciting to support businesses in emulating what they cannot show themselves, to show the essence of a business through visuals. You can be the best business but without brilliant branding, you cannot express this.

What advice would you offer young aspiring businesswomen in your field? – Strive for what your passionate about, don't follow the norm but be inquisitive. Challenge yourself because you're always capable of so much more than you believe in. I think being a women in business is empowering and rewarding. To be the loudest voice in the room doesn't always equate to the most intelligent. I've learned a lot through observing and pivoting.

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Home

Sunshine Coast

Home Sunshine Coast principal Kate Jewry and property consultant Jess Ruskin are passionate about property and people. With a wealth of experience between them, they share what inspires and drives them and how they have achieved such a great success story.

What inspired you to enter your field of work? – Jess: At the time I entered the industry, it was without the realisation that it would be a lifelong career. I very quickly fell in love with real estate and opportunities that property investing gave people.

Kate: One might say real estate found me! I was a small business owner of an educational toy store in beautiful Cotton Tree prior to becoming an agent. Having now been in real estate for more than 20 years, then transitioning to opening an agency alongside my incredible business partner Jay (four years ago), I can proudly say that I have been able to combine the best of my two favourite careers.

Can you share your journey to becoming a successful businesswoman on the Sunshine Coast? – Kate: I have always been a self-starter, relying on my passion and drive to help people. I went into real estate sales to bring an honest and genuine approach into the industry. I had some wonderful, strong, successful women in business around me. We shared thoughts, stories, concerns and experiences along the way.

Jess: I started my real estate career in Canberra, back in 2004. I quickly moved from an assistant role into sales and then principal for a large corporate agency before deciding to make the move to the Sunshine Coast in 2012 to start a family.

How do you balance the demands of your work/personal life? – Kate: I love what I do, but sometimes I find it difficult to create the perfect work/life balance. To ensure my sanity and performance I make sure to take a couple of trips away to regroup, refresh and unwind, to switch off as much as possible, so that when I am back, I am at the top of my game. I am also lucky that the women around me in my work and social circles bring me an abundance of love and joy in my life.

Jess: My husband and I work together and this enables us to have a really nice balance in the world of work and family life with our 10-year-old daughter. Wellness is a huge focus in our household and it's what keeps us energised for everything that life throws at you.

In what ways has being on the Sunshine Coast influenced your leadership style? – Jess: Being a lifestyle destination, we often sell properties for clients who are moving here for that reason or are selling investments that have allowed them to holiday here. Honouring and acknowledging that motivation in a negotiation is key.

Kate: We are so lucky to be in a region that is away from a lot of city stresses, to be able to start and finish our day with a walk on the beach and to be grateful for that.

What has been your biggest achievement in business? – Jess: It's my 20-year anniversary in real estate this year which feels like a huge win. It's been an amazing journey.



Jess Ruskin (property consultant) and Kate Jewry (principal)

Kate: Having been in business on the Coast for what seems like a lifetime, I am proud to say opening Home Sunshine Coast four years ago (at the start of Covid) as a fresh and honest boutique agency. Working with the beautiful team has been a joy, a privilege and a massive achievement. But my biggest achievements have been the relationships and results for my clients along the way.

What excites you the most about your industry? – Jess: The ability to work a job that is fun, flexible and rewarding, all while helping people buy or sell their biggest asset.

Kate: I absolutely just love helping people. To be able to make huge changes in people's lives by getting the very best result for them with the sale of their biggest asset or finding the perfect forever home or investment for them. The biggest excitement is the wonderful people I get to meet and become friends with along the way. The diversity of each and every day never ceases to amaze me.

What are some of the unique challenges you face in your industry and how do you overcome them? – Jess: Emotions can run high when people are stressed. The right agent can reduce this and take the pressure off the client and I like to be that for someone. It's important to have efficient systems,

skills and contacts in adjoining industries to help the process flow seamlessly.

Kate: Having to juggle many hats in our role: You just never know what is going on in the background of someone's life and need to be constantly aware of stresses that people are facing in their day to day, so we always approach situations with empathy and understanding, no matter what.

What advice would you offer young aspiring businesswomen in your field? – Kate: Be honest, be kind and trust your instinct. Being helpful, genuine and doing the work you love will always lead you in the right direction.

Jess: Women are often great communicators, so tap into that skill and knowing. Gear efforts towards results, not just the work. Ensure you have great energy, knowledge and passion.

H O M E

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Kirsty Woodward

With 28 years' experience in property management, Kirsty Woodward says her role has never been just a job, but a passion. Kirsty has extensive knowledge with the current legislation and believes that communication between property owners and tenants is the key to a successful business relationship and positive outcomes.

What inspired you to choose a career in real estate? – My mother was in real estate when I was growing up. When I was in Year 10, I did work experience in the September school holidays at my mum's work, assisting the property managers. During my second week, I was called into the boss's office and was offered a full-time job as an assistant property manager, commencing at the end of Year 10. I never thought my parents would allow me to leave school without finishing Year 12. However, they left the decision in my hands. I accepted the job, and I have never looked back.

Can you share your journey to becoming a successful businesswoman on the Sunshine Coast? – I have managed a number of property management departments on the Sunshine Coast. Previous to where I am now, I was approached by one of my tenants at the time, asking if I would like to be part of starting a brand-new, property management-only company. It was fresh off the ground with zero properties. I took the leap, knowing that we would either sink or swim. Ten years on, it was one of the biggest property management companies on the Coast. I was then a passenger in a serious head-on collision, whereby I spent two months in hospital with 23 fractures, including my C1, which no one ever survives, let alone being able to walk again. I was forced to resign from this position and then I focused on my rehabilitation. Ten months later, I found Network HQ and I am so thrilled to be leading our property management division with such a great support network around me.

How do you balance the demands of your work/personal life? – I am a single mum to two amazing children, aged 9 and 10 (this year). I have learnt how to switch off and focus my time on having fun with my kids. In saying this, I still wake up very early each morning, make a coffee and get on to my work emails (I just can't help myself).

What has been your biggest achievement in business to date? – Being released from hospital after my accident in a wheelchair 18 months ago to being back better than ever in property management. Having previous clients reach out to me when they find out I am back and wanting to work with me again as their "favourite and preferred property manager" really does spur on my passion for property management. I am a new person and am proud to be building yet another successful property management department, with new and innovative experience for us all.

What upcoming developments are you excited about for your business and how do you see them contributing to the local economy/community? – We have a unique



property management system. It is designed to make an investor's plan even easier. We believe that we have ticked a few extra boxes for them, and this in turn has encouraged some of our investors to add to their portfolio, which in turn adds to the rental market availability. This translates to more homes for our Sunshine Coasters.

What excites you the most about your industry? – Every day is different and exciting. It's very fast paced. I am a terrific problem solver, which you need in order to be a very good property manager. I deal with so many amazing owners, tenants and contractors. Given the current demand for properties, I also love approving a new application. Seeing and hearing the sigh of relief that they have a home to go to is just very satisfying.

What are some of the unique challenges you face in your industry and how do you overcome them? – Making everyone happy. I am a middle person who knows how to negotiate for the best outcome for all parties involved. You also cannot take anything personally. This housing crisis the Sunshine Coast is going through is tough. I just wish that I could home everyone looking for a property, but I simply cannot. So, when I decline all the applications of those who were unlucky at that time of securing a property,

I just reassure them to keep going and never give up as that perfect home is just around the corner.

What advice would you offer young, aspiring businesswomen in your field? – Never take anything personally. Be sure to communicate always with all of your clients. Make sure you do have a perfect work/home life balance, otherwise you will burn out. If you make a mistake, deal with it immediately as everything is fixable and what better way to learn.

What does it take to be the best in your field? – You have to be an outstanding communicator. Communication is the key in our industry. Follow through on all your promises. Deal with the toads (harder things to deal with) immediately. Be confident in what you do and, most importantly, love what you do.

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Lisa Aitken

Lisa Aitken is the managing director with specialist employment law firm Aitken Legal. With vast experience in all facets of employment law, Lisa is passionate about helping employers meet their obligations and minimise their risk when managing employees. Ms Aitken shares her success story.

What inspired you to enter your field of work? – I always liked the idea of being a lawyer, but my first career choice after school was mothercraft nursing. Then, after travelling overseas for 12 months, I returned home and decided to study law. I got a job working as a receptionist full-time in a Sydney law firm while I studied law part-time. All the way through my studies, I wanted to be a criminal lawyer. Then when I graduated, I got a job at top-tier firm Minter Ellison Lawyers in Sydney, where graduate lawyers are meant to rotate through three practice areas (six months in each). My first rotation was in employment law, and I never left.

Can you share your journey to becoming a successful businesswoman on the Sunshine Coast? – In January 2006, I opened Aitken Legal out of my home office. It was just me. I started from home because I thought it would take some time to grow and wanted to keep overheads low. I also had three children aged five, three and eight months. So, it allowed me to be there for them more. However, within three months, I had an office in Caloundra as I was busy from the get-go. Some of my first clients were Caloundra and Maroochydore councils (pre-amalgamation). We are still a small business with a great team of 10. The senior lawyers have 12, 13 and 16 years' tenure with our firm (and me with 18 years) and our accounts manager has been with us for 17 years. I believe this is evidence of the great workplace culture we've built. Everyone plays an important role in our firm being successful, not just me. We appreciate each other and the contribution each person makes to our firm. Without this workplace culture, I don't believe Aitken Legal would be as successful as it is.

How do you balance the demands of your work/personal life? – That has always been an ongoing journey. When I started Aitken Legal with three very young children, it was difficult. After a few years, my husband and I agreed that he would sell his business and become a 'stay-at-home parent'. My children are older now, so it is much easier. However, family is still the most important thing to me. I've always had a rule: when I am at work, I'm a lawyer; but when I leave the office, I'm mum, wife, sister, daughter and friend.

What initiatives or support networks are important for empowering and encouraging women in business on the Sunshine Coast? – The Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network is a great support network for business women. I spent a lot of time attending their networking events, particularly in the early years. I was also fortunate to win the Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network – Small Business Woman Award in 2008 and Corporate Business Woman Award in 2010, and met some amazing women through this process.



What has been your biggest achievement in business to date? – Aitken Legal was successful in being appointed to the Whole-of-Government Legal Services Panel for workplace relations in 2020 and remains on that panel to date. This was a huge achievement for a firm of our size and being regionally based, as the majority are top-tier city firms that have a national presence. We are the only boutique firm in employment law. However, I would say that the wonderful team members I have, and what they each contribute towards our firm to help me make it successful, is the biggest business achievement.

What upcoming developments are you excited about for your business and how do you see them contributing to the local economy/community? – I am a firm believer that giving back to the community is hugely important. Last year, our Giggle Ball (held every few years) raised \$141,000 net for endED: a charity supporting people (and their families) with eating disorders. We are excited to be bringing back the Sunshine Coast Corporate Charity Golf Challenge on August 23 as part of 92.7 Mix FM's Give Me 5 for Kids appeal which raises funds for Wishlist. Those funds go towards growing health needs of local sick children (and their families).

What excites you the most about your industry? – The thing I have always loved about employment law is that it is forever challenging. I've been practising in this area of law for 30 years this year (shows my age!) and I can honestly say that it is still challenging and never dull. I still hear of things that people do in the workplace and get gobsmacked. There are so many areas to employment law with every one of them involving human behaviour which is unpredictable.

What are some of the unique challenges you face in your industry and how do you overcome them? – The biggest

challenge is finding experienced employment lawyers (particularly since Covid) who meet the standards to which I hold our firm. I won't jeopardise our reputation as specialist employment lawyers by having anyone who does not meet our high standards.

What advice would you offer young, aspiring businesswomen in your field? – You can do it all. Don't sacrifice dreams of a career, family or great life outside of work by thinking that you can't have it all. You are the only one who can control that and yes, you will have to make some sacrifices but just make sure you're not sacrificing what means the most to you ... and be really good at time management.

How has your industry changed or evolved over the years? – The complexities and many areas of law that are within employment law are underestimated which, particularly in the early days of my career, saw people think it was just glorified HR. However, it is far more complicated than it may look on the surface. I think with the evolution of employment law, it has gained a lot more respect – both within the legal community and from employers.

What does it take to be the best in your field? – Hard work, dedication and surrounding yourself with people who are even smarter than you.



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Jodie *McDonnell*
0419 762 309

What inspired you to enter the real estate industry?

My father was a real estate agent with his own agency in Bondi Road in the '60s and sold it in the early '70s, just before we moved to the Sunshine Coast. Things were very different then. I finished high school in the late '70s and worked as a radio copywriter first up, followed by several years with a local newspaper, and then with Hyatt Regency Coolum as conference sales manager when it opened for the first four to five years. All these experiences were very sales oriented and there came a point where I started thinking about working in real estate. Dad was encouraging, and the doors opened for me in 2003 with what was then one of the long-standing agencies on the Sunshine Coast: Ken Guy Real Estate. It was all a bit nerve-racking to begin with, but I soon saw how the other jobs I had along the way somehow folded in to working in real estate. I had to market myself to make it work, and it did.



Candice *Phillips*
0450 703 681

What excites you the most about your industry?

The endless potential for professional and personal growth and success. The industry is a dynamic one that is ever-changing, offering many opportunities for creativity and innovation. Whether it's buying, selling or investing in properties, there is also an opportunity to learn and improve. I am very interested in the way the real estate industry plays a crucial role in shaping communities and improving people's lives. Being a part of the process, whether it's helping people find their forever home or achieving a great result for their property, is highly rewarding. The industry provides a platform and great opportunity to build lasting relationships and networks. Working with clients, agents, brokers and other professionals allows for collaboration and sharing knowledge. The industry offers a dynamic and rewarding career path with unlimited potential for growth, community impact and success.



Melissa *Anderson*
0403 427 762

What initiatives or support networks empower and encourage women in business on the Sunshine Coast?

Initiatives such as mentorship programs, networking events and business development workshops can be vital for empowering and encouraging women in business. Establishing support networks specifically tailored to women in business, where they can share experiences, resources and advice, can foster a sense of community and collaboration. Educational initiatives focusing on skills development and leadership training can help women navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. A very simple initiative is to meet the agent where they're at in life, acknowledge and appreciate how they work best and allow them to do so. Encourage them to see what they're doing as their own business within the brand they're working for. This results in a full focus on their own track and success accompanies it.



Layne *McLure*
0400 522 926

Why did you decide on a career in real estate and what sets you apart from the rest?

As a real estate professional, my main objective is to care for and nurture my clients through the process of buying or selling a home using my experience, strong work ethic and encouraging attitude. Growing up around real estate professionals, I guess you could say it is in my blood. I pride myself on being efficient, collaborative, and communicative. With a diverse employment history within the real estate industry, my thorough approach to all tasks ensures I deliver the award-winning service our clients have come to expect.



Lauren *Hedgman*
0423 138 605

What has been your real estate journey and how has that shaped you as the agent you are today?

Having started my real estate journey with Century 21 on Duporth 11 years ago in front-of-house on reception, I then moved quickly into property management. In 2015, I went into residential sales, leading a high-performing team of four sales associates under owner and principal Damien Said for eight years. Now as a sole agent, I've 'hit the ground running' and, in my first year, been awarded Centurion status, putting me in the top two per cent of Century 21 agents across Australasia and have just hired my first sales associate. Having worked across all aspects of real estate, I've been afforded a broad knowledge of the industry that comes with facilitating thousands of sales, allowing me to create a tailored approach to each property sale. I can help guide and inform my clients, creating a smooth and stress-free process.



Sue Brookes

0477 251 164

What special qualities do women bring to the real estate industry?

In the dynamic realm of real estate, women are redefining professionalism with a touch of finesse and a dash of flair. Beyond the traditional confines of the industry, these leading ladies are injecting a sense of excitement and innovation, all while maintaining the utmost standards of integrity and expertise. Imagine walking into an open house, greeted by impeccably dressed agents who seamlessly blend warmth with professionalism. Despite the challenges and stereotypes, these women are proving that success knows no gender. Through their unwavering commitment to excellence and their ability to navigate complexities with grace, they're not just closing deals – they're opening doors for future generations of women in real estate.



Sarah Roberts

0422 242 425

What are the unique challenges in your industry and how do you overcome them?

Purchasing or selling a property is quite often coupled with a big life event – relationship breakups, death of a loved one, change in job, retirement, moving interstate, pregnancy etc. It's quite often a highly stressful time for our clients and rightly so. The 'hurt' or 'heartache' behind why they are needing to transact can sometimes be almost impossible not to take on board myself as the agent, as I'm literally thrown into the day-to-day lives of my clients – sometimes for a few weeks and sometimes for a number of months. I thought this would ease with time in the industry, but I'm not sure ... maybe it's a personality thing. My role is to negate the roller-coaster ride throughout the sale and keep the process as seamless as possible. Big life events, good and bad, have actually led to some really great outcomes for my clients and some wonderful client relationships and even lifelong friendships.



Tracey Kay

0401 733 133

Can you share your experience in the real estate industry and your tips for success?

Starting my journey to success as a businesswoman on the Sunshine Coast has taken a lot of determination, resilience and a constant dedication to providing top-notch service to my clients every day. As a busy mum of three teenagers, my life is a constant balancing act between work and family commitments. I often remind myself of the saying: "You can have it all – just not all at once." I've had the chance to work with some of the most-respected women in the Sunshine Coast real estate industry, and I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together. I have so much respect for each of them. This industry isn't for the faint of heart, but the rewards of working with other like-minded businesswomen are amazing. Looking back on my journey and ahead to the future, I'm grateful for the support of my colleagues and mentors. I'm excited about what's to come.



Bronte Hildred

0434 212 345

What does it take to be the best in your field?

Becoming the best in your field is a dynamic journey fuelled by passion, unwavering motivation and a genuine care for your craft. I like to think it's about embracing a pursuit of excellence while also remaining open to continuous learning and upskilling. True mastery takes both dedication and adaptability, as well as a commitment to evolving with the changing landscape of your industry. In my own career, I have a massive passion for what I'm doing, and this ignites the spark that propels me forward, motivating me to surpass limits and redefine my boundaries, as well as genuine care for my work. This transforms the ordinary into extraordinary, as each task becomes a personal investment in the quality of my work. By embracing a mindset of perpetual learning, you not only stay ahead of the curve but also create an environment where collaboration and knowledge thrive. The path to being the best is a true combination of heart, tenacity and a perpetual hunger for growth.



Penny Getz

0416 032 472

How has your industry changed or evolved over the years?

Over the past 12 years, my experience in real estate has been a continuing growth mindset of innovation and adaptation. Technology has been the biggest game changer, transforming how we list, market and sell properties. From virtual tours to AI-driven pricing algorithms, the digital landscape has reshaped every aspect of the industry, making it more efficient and competitive. On an individual level, maintaining personal client relationships has become paramount. In a day where so much is automated, there is nothing better than having an agent pick up the phone and check in and assist. Economic downturns, regulatory changes and global events such as the pandemic have tested our resilience and forced us to rethink traditional approaches. Despite the ups and downs, one thing remains constant: the thrill of helping clients find their dream home or make a smart investment.





Gail Allison & Siobhan Allison

Pathway Legal

Pathway Legal is a family-owned and operated law firm with offices on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Noosa Heads, servicing clients throughout Australia. We catch up with some of the team to discover what it takes to be top of their game and the challenges and rewards of being a successful woman in business in the legal industry.

What inspired you to enter your field of work?

NICOLE DAWSON: I have a passion for the law and for helping people. I have worked solely in the area of family law in a range of roles for almost 30 years. It may seem trite, but family law really is about supporting people working through one of the most confronting and challenging life changes. Being a family lawyer means working for your client to give them a platform to start over. No matter how difficult it may be or how long it may take, there will eventually be a resolution. My inspiration comes from my work colleagues, past and present, and from seeing my clients get to the end of what initially may have felt like an impossible task.

Can you share your journey to becoming a successful businesswoman on the Sunshine Coast?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: I never set out on this journey with a view to being a 'successful businesswoman'. Rather, it was with a view to being able to support my family financially while still being present, being able to attend my children's school events, being home for dinner, tucking my children in at night. Ultimately, that view is



The Pathway Legal team

what has contributed to my success. That and an exceptional team of women working alongside me.

How do you balance the demands of your work/personal life?

NICOLE DAWSON: I am a juggler; some might say I'm the court jester. Being a working professional and parent means you have a lot of balls in the air at the same time. You might fumble at times but having a sense of humour and solid support in the office, at home and in your social network really are key – together with a charged-up mobile phone and an alarm clock.

SIOBHAN ALLISON: Charged-up mobile phone. What's that?

MANDY CARMODY: I have set boundaries which include not having work emails on my phone, my phone switching to 'do not disturb' between the hours of 8pm and 7am, and ensuring that I start my day with some exercise which is not only 'me time' but also helps with stress. I try not to reach for a glass of wine at the end of a stressful day as that's a slippery slope that doesn't really help in the long run. I try and do the time critical



tasks first up in the morning to ensure I'm not frantic near the end of the day.

In what ways has being on the Sunshine Coast influenced your leadership style?

NICOLE DAWSON: The Sunshine Coast Law Association (SCLA) and business community are very supportive and collegiate groups. I can call on a number of professionals who are willing to have a coffee and a chat and this means my leadership style reflects an 'open-door' policy. This applies to staff and colleagues across the Coast. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to connect with other professionals. The Sunshine Coast is full of amazing people who are really committed to seeing businesses thrive.

What initiatives or support networks are important for empowering and encouraging women in business on the Sunshine Coast?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: The Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network is the first one that comes to mind – a vibrant network of like-minded women committed to supporting and inspiring each other. The Sunshine Coast

Law Association is another one. While the SCLA is for all men and women in the legal profession, the committee is made up of predominantly women and they host a string of wonderful events each year.

What has been your biggest achievement in business to date?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: Opening our third office in Noosa Heads and growing to a team of nine. I am extremely proud of the team I have created and the reputation and legacy that I have created for myself and my firm.

What upcoming developments are you excited about for your business and how do you see them contributing to the local economy/community?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: Pathway Legal has steadily grown from its Gold Coast base in 2008, expanding to Coolum Beach in 2018 and now to our Noosa office in 2024. The growth in the firm is not just geographic. We have also employed more staff – all Coast locals – to meet the growing needs of our clients. We are really excited about what lies ahead for the firm. Watch this space for upcoming information sessions in relation to estate

planning and family law matters to continue our contribution to the economy and our connection to the community.

What excites you the most about your industry?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: I love watching our profession constantly evolve. With the introduction of hybrid working environments, new technology systems, cloud-based platforms and even AI (used with caution), nothing is out of reach for our profession. The key is to be able to lean into the legal profession's technological advances while still maintaining a client-centred approach.

What are some of the unique challenges you face in your industry and how do you overcome them?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: Being a woman in the legal profession is a challenge within itself. Being in a typical male-dominated profession, we as women are forced to 'earn our keep'. Imposter Syndrome is common among women in the legal profession. Ultimately, the key is to simply back yourself and to know that you are not alone. We, as women in the legal industry, offer a point of difference. I pride myself on operating a female-owned and operated law firm and I have an exceptional team of women supporting me. As a parent, my responsibility is to show my children that you can follow your passion and provide for your family. My legacy is to show my daughters and my team that the benefits far outweigh the challenges.

What advice would you offer young, aspiring businesswomen in your field?

SIOBHAN ALLISON: Find a lawyer who can serve as your mentor and learn and grow from them, personally and professionally. Do not perceive to know everything. You don't! Ask questions and always be willing to learn.

GAIL ALLISON: To be successful, it is important to firstly love what you are doing and then be bold and take some risks that you might not normally take. Being successful often means taking risks, backing yourself and making some hard choices. Surround yourself with a great team of positive, like-minded people and constantly push yourself beyond your comfort zone.

How has your industry changed or evolved over the years?

JAIE SWEET: Technology. Gone are the days of writing cheques, filing paper application forms and wading through 100 paper files sitting on your desk. Covid forced our profession to adapt and evolve for the better. PEXA (an electronic settlement platform) was introduced and has made handling several conveyancing settlements on the same day a breeze – a far cry from the paper settlement days.

What does it take to be the best in your field?

GAIL ALLISON: Knowledge of the law itself is naturally critical and essential to being able to provide the best advice. I believe that it is the ability to truly listen, understand and empathise with the client that will achieve the optimal outcome and satisfaction for the client and make you the best in your field.



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