

Giving business *a unique voice*

By Amanda Wright

If life is one big show, and the stage is the entire world, it's easy to see why a small business would find its first performance daunting.

Jo Foster, Founder of JFM Advertising & Design, has dedicated her last eleven years toward helping small and medium businesses become star performers. Her expertise and genuine desire to help other businesses succeed is driven from turning a compelling story into a great brand, and making sure that brand is delivered to the largest audience possible.

Jo's passion for our local community arises from being a born and bred Mid-Cantabrian. No stranger to gumboots and the rustic charm of the land, Jo grew up on her parent's farm in Dorie with her two brothers Shane and Corey.

Jo attended Dorie Primary School and then Ashburton College where she was Orange House Captain, allowing her natural leadership and motivation for success to blossom.

Jo had a natural way with words, and her first position of employment after college was as an office junior with a local legal firm.

With a bright personality and ambition bursting at the seams, Jo craved more contact with people, and accepted a position with the Ashburton Guardian.

Starting as an enthusiastic office junior, Jo's desire to help businesses succeed and her passion for marketing grew, and soon she was a busy and popular advertising sales representative with the Guardian.

When Jo's brother Corey started his own joinery business, Foster's Joinery, Jo was keen to use her marketing prowess and business contacts to help his business develop a recognisable brand.

"I helped Corey's business develop its company profile with a range of marketing and customer care tools. I wanted to help give his company a voice, so we grew the brand from the ground up.

"I enjoyed the process so much, I realised that if I could help his business to build its brand from scratch, then I could help other businesses too. That's where my passion for owning my own business developed," Jo said.

Without hesitation, Jo developed a plan to turn her ambition into reality. Knowing that she wouldn't enjoy the isolation that came with working from home, she set out to find an affordable office space that would suit her business plan.

Jo was in luck. Such a space existed at the Rural Transport site. Jo leased one office

room and opened the doors to JFM Advertising & Design in 2006.

Jo's client database steadily grew as word spread of the all-inclusive service she could offer to help businesses achieve their marketing goals. As a special highlight during the first year of business, Foster's Joinery went on to win the best new business category at the Ashburton Business Association awards in 2007.

Tragically later that year, Jo's brother Corey didn't return home after a hunting trip in the Avoca Valley, inland from Lake Coleridge. After eight days since Corey was reported missing, the search for him was called off, much to the despair of his loving family. He was only 24 years of age, and his family were devastated at the loss of such a talented and lively man.

Jo's business continued to grow thanks to the terrific support of the local business community, and after hiring a graphic designer and an administration assistant, Jo had out-grown the space at Rural Transport and needed to move into a larger premises.

In 2009 Jo was thrilled to discover the large 200 square metre, open plan office space above the post office.

The location and potential for development was perfect, so every night for three months, Jo and her partner James, as well as her mum and dad and other family members all pitched in to help turn it into the chic, modern office space that it is today.

Together they built offices, a board room, layed carpet, painted walls, hung wall paper and designed the space to be light and inviting to clients, as well as a functional work environ-

ment for Jo's steadily growing creative team.

From humble beginnings, JFM Advertising & Design has grown into one of Ashburton's most recognisable brands, with a reputation for going the extra mile to deliver results to its clients.

Focusing on small and medium business, JFM work to empower business owners to take actions that will turn their clients into enthusiastic fans. In return, satisfied clients then turn into brand ambassadors, resulting in a new market of possibilities. It's all part of JFM's ability to offer a full suite of services, from brand creation, management and implementation, through to media placement, copy writing, photography, website creation, and social media.

"Because all of our services are created in-house, we offer more control over the quality and continuity of the product being designed for our clients.

"We take a holistic approach to our clients' needs, and work with one aim in mind, creating growth for them, be it in profit, market share or brand awareness," Jo said.

When she isn't working hard to help other local businesses find their voice, Jo enjoys to travel, and has fond memories of two overland safari adventures in Africa.

"Being on safari in Africa is exhilarating. There's something special about traveling amongst the vast landscapes and spectacular African wildlife that invigorates the soul.

"The trips were from Cape Town to Nairobi, in a truck with about 16 people as part of the tour group. In the Serengeti there are designated areas where the tour groups were allowed to camp in the wilderness, so for safety, we

would pitch our tents in a tight circle around the vehicle. Elephants would wander past, and you could hear lions serenading in the early evening. You would think that the noise of wild animals would keep you awake, but it's surprisingly relaxing and soothes you to sleep.

"You do feel a tad nervous being only in a tent, but there are park rangers that patrol the areas where tour groups camp to keep an eye on any of the large animals that may come close to the group.

"I've seen all the 'big five' which was a fantastic experience, and had the thrill of hot air ballooning over the Serengeti, with a champagne full cooked breakfast served to us at the area the balloon landed.

"One of my most memorable experiences was at the Ngorongoro crater, where a lioness was only about a metre away from us, when all of a sudden her cubs jumped up onto the bonnet of the vehicle we were in. They were adorable. On another interesting occasion in Botswana, we were traveling in an open-top bus, where we came close to some elephants. We were told by the driver to stay seated, but of course there was a couple of people who decided to stand, which spooked the elephants into a frenzy. They stomped their feet, swayed their trunks and make a huge amount of noise, so our driver got out of there fast before they got any more aggressive," Jo said.

Back home, being born and bred in the Ashburton area, Jo is thrilled that her business is able to give back to the community that she loves to call home.

"Because the community is pivotal to the

success of our business, we give back to the community where we can. We are a sponsor of the EA Networks Sports Centre, and many other organisations. Each year we assist the Ashburton A&P Show through developing the show bags," Jo said.

With a team that has now grown to include an Account Manager, three Graphic Design artists, and an after school web coder, Jo attributes much of JFM's great reputation to the hard work and dedication of her staff.

"I see my team go above and beyond on a regular basis to offer the very best to our clients, and that is something that I am very proud to see. It's important to me that they are happy in their work, and have the opportunity to grow as individuals," Jo said.

With such dedication to her business and clients, as well as to her partner James and his three children, two of which live with the couple, it's hard to imagine that Jo would have any time left to dedicate to other outside interests. However Jo is also a member of Zonta, and a strong advocate of women in business, and advancing the status of women amongst the community.

Jo was also a founding member that helped launch the Ashburton Chapter of BNI, a business networking group that meet weekly to refer business leads.

Jo has a soft spot for a well brewed, strong cup of coffee. If you see her in one of our fine local cafés, and would like some advice for your business, don't be shy to introduce yourself. That first step could open your business up to a new world of opportunity.

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