

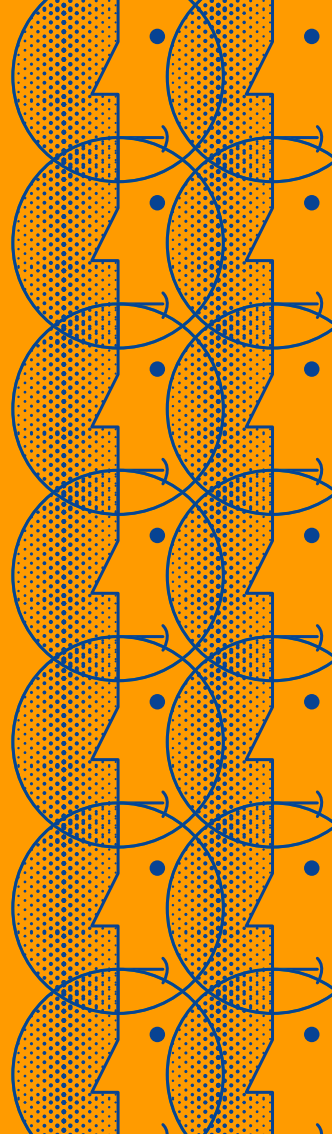
GOCARDLESS

Modern-day accountancy and bookkeeping are about much more than handling client relationships and crunching numbers. Demands on accountants are greater than ever before, from the need to keep ahead of the latest technology to the ability to develop diverse business skills.

GoCardless talked to a handful of practice owners and advisors to discover their top tips for financial success – and, if they could go back in time, what words of advice they would give to their younger selves.



**LEAD BY
EXAMPLE**



If you want your team to adopt cutting-edge technology, you need to understand how to use it, too, says Kylie Parker, director of Lotus Accountants.

After 26 years working as a chartered accountant in Sydney and London both for small firms and professional services giant Deloitte, Kylie set up her own practice in 2005, which became a top 100 Accounting firm.

In 2015, she joined forces with a former colleague to build a new practice, Lotus Accountants, this time fully in the cloud. She rapidly realised all the things she did not know.

"Having been a partner for such a long time, you're not involved in the day-to-day work," she says. "I wanted to train staff and help people, but I simply couldn't. Too many people of my generation expect employees to learn about new technology, but prefer not to get their own hands dirty."

You're never too old or too senior to learn

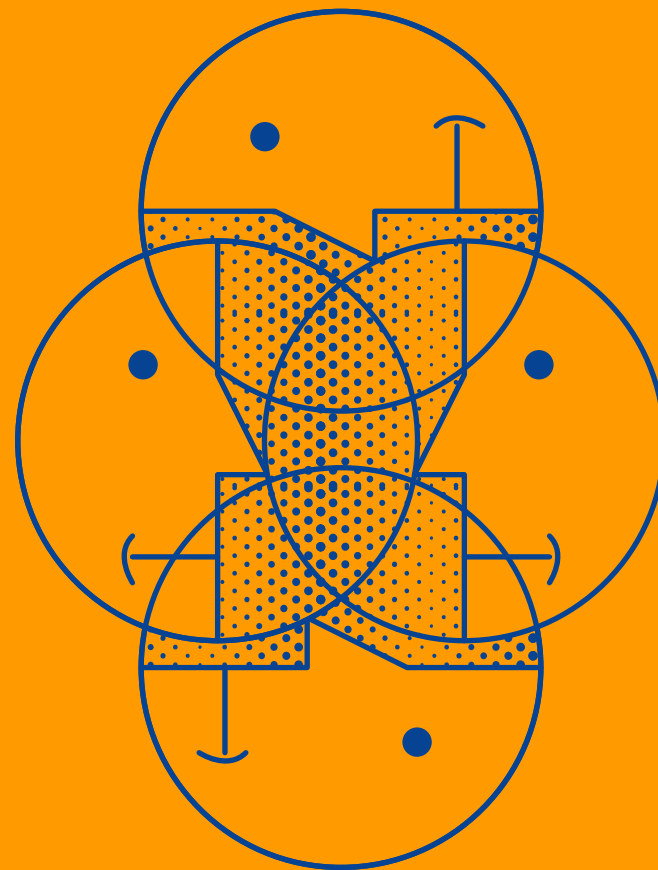
Kylie opted to take some time away to work for Xero, the Small Business software platform, to learn about the latest technological developments. It also gave her a valuable insight into Xero's clients and partners.

Moving into her own business with this experience under her belt gave her a clear view of what Lotus should outsource and automate, plus how it could use accounting software to best effect.

"An accountant at any level should be able to review a Xero file. If they don't know how, they need to learn," Kylie adds. "Meet your sales manager from the software firm you employ, watch videos, go to events. It's so important to get the basics right, to sort out your internal infrastructure."

"My biggest mistake in 2010 was thinking that the firms adopting Xero and fixed monthly pricing models were servicing small clients and I wasn't competing in that market. Those same small clients are the ones now disrupting traditional large corporates."

She concludes: "You're never too old or too senior to learn. If you can work an iPhone, you can use Xero. It's vital because there are new firms starting up with cloud-only clients. The gap between those who have adopted tech and those who haven't is getting bigger every day."



WHEN IT COMES TO THE

CLOUD

DON'T BE IN A

RUSH

DO IT PROPERLY



When you migrate to the cloud, research thoroughly and figure out what you need to prioritise before taking action, says Paul Murray, co-founder of AccountKit.

Paul and his wife Paula had run Adelaide-based accountancy firm Murray Business Solutions for 11 years when they decided to develop and launch AccountKit, a software toolkit to help accountants manage and automate a range of business functions from day-to-day administration to compliance and even consulting work.

"We wanted to build something to fill the gaps we could see to help other accounting firms like us," Paul explains. "There were still many things we did as accountants that were manual or buried within spreadsheets, so we wanted to automate some of those aspects and reduce the effort required to fulfill our day to day functions."

Paul understands the anxiety businesses feel about migrating to cloud-based services. He adds: "Sometimes, it can feel like everyone is in the cloud but you. In reality, it's actually a small proportion that are fully integrated. It's a long journey, but don't worry. Don't be in a rush. Do it properly."

He advises talking to key software providers to get demos of their offerings, as well as asking questions of other firms and peers about how they have handled the transition.

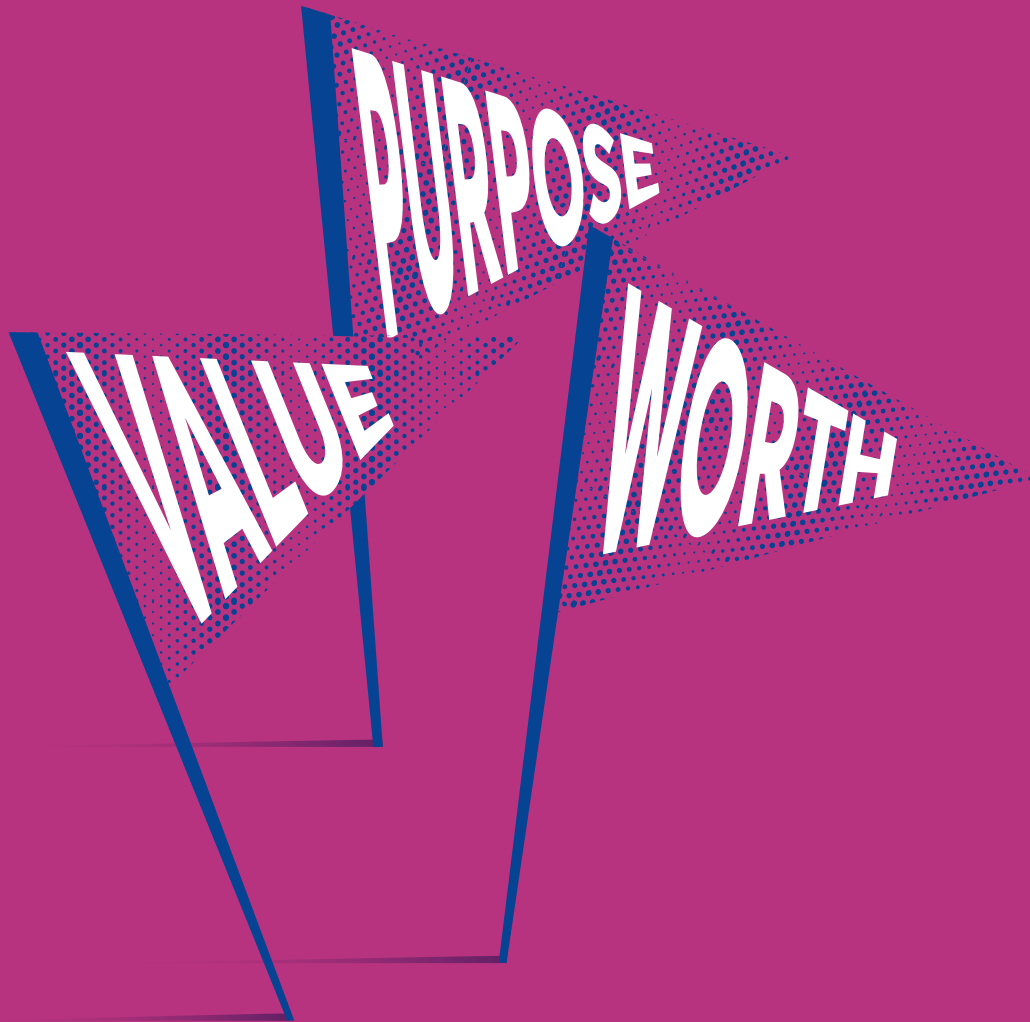
Advisers such as Xero State Managers can be helpful to find out what other people are using and how they are tackling the issues your business faces.

"Draw up a list of everything that needs to be done, choose what to focus on and then bed down the new system around those elements before moving on to other areas. Use an implementation partner where possible to prevent making mistakes. The cost is worth it."

Finally, Paul warns against neglecting to communicate with staff while the company migrates to cloud systems. "Help them, encourage them. They may find it a pain at first, but, in time, they will see a bright light at the end of the tunnel."



**THE COST
IS WORTH IT**



Timothy Munro, founder of Change Accountants, believes you should know *why* you're doing things to be able to help clients. Then, properly communicate the results to them.

"Why do you get out of bed every day?" asks Timothy. "Your team needs to know that, too, to be engaged and happy at work. Only the owner can set that purpose in the business."

Timothy's own *raison d'être* is "to help clients make smart financial decisions today for a beautiful future tomorrow."

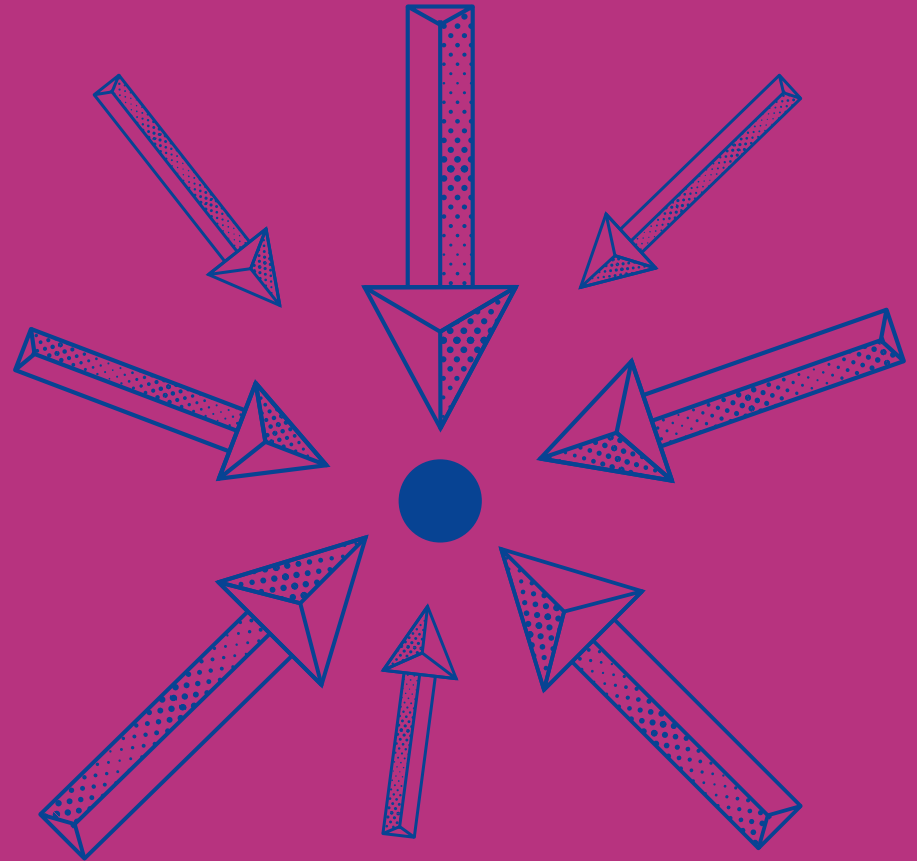
His team of 24 make up the cloud-only, Xero-based Change Accountants, offering accountancy and wealth advice to hundreds of business customers as well as thousands of individual clients from the practice's base in Brisbane. The business also has a technology division, which runs a cloud platform of application templates covering everything an accountant should offer a client.

Timothy says relationships and rapport remain of paramount importance – really understanding what clients want. It is also essential to communicate properly what outcome and value the accountancy service has produced, he says.

“You have to be 100% focused on outcomes for the client, but, at the same time, realise you have to price it properly to make a profit for your business,” Timothy says. “Too many accountants feel awkward talking about price. Charge a sensible amount so you can do the proper job to help them. Clients will pay. And use the tools available, such as GoProposal and GoCardless, to help with payments.”

Once an accountancy practice has worked out why it operates and what it stands for, much comes down to its people, Timothy thinks.

He says: “Find the team members that love and live by your core purpose and values, focus on delivery, sort out your pricing and stay on track. Never neglect to think about how you can keep a client once you have them. When accounting businesses do these things well, as well as the core services, they can clearly differentiate themselves from their competitors. And their clients will love them!”



RECOGNISE WHAT

numbers

MATTER



Small businesses are often faced with cash flow challenges, says Josie Attard, head of success ANZ for Futrli, so accountants should help them keep on track.

"The biggest mistake small businesses can make is to rely solely on their profit and loss to determine how their business is performing," suggests Josie. "They get caught up in the everyday running of the business and lose sight of the bigger picture. Accountants can help to educate them on cash flow and its significance to their survival. Talking about P&L and tax does not make a successful business."

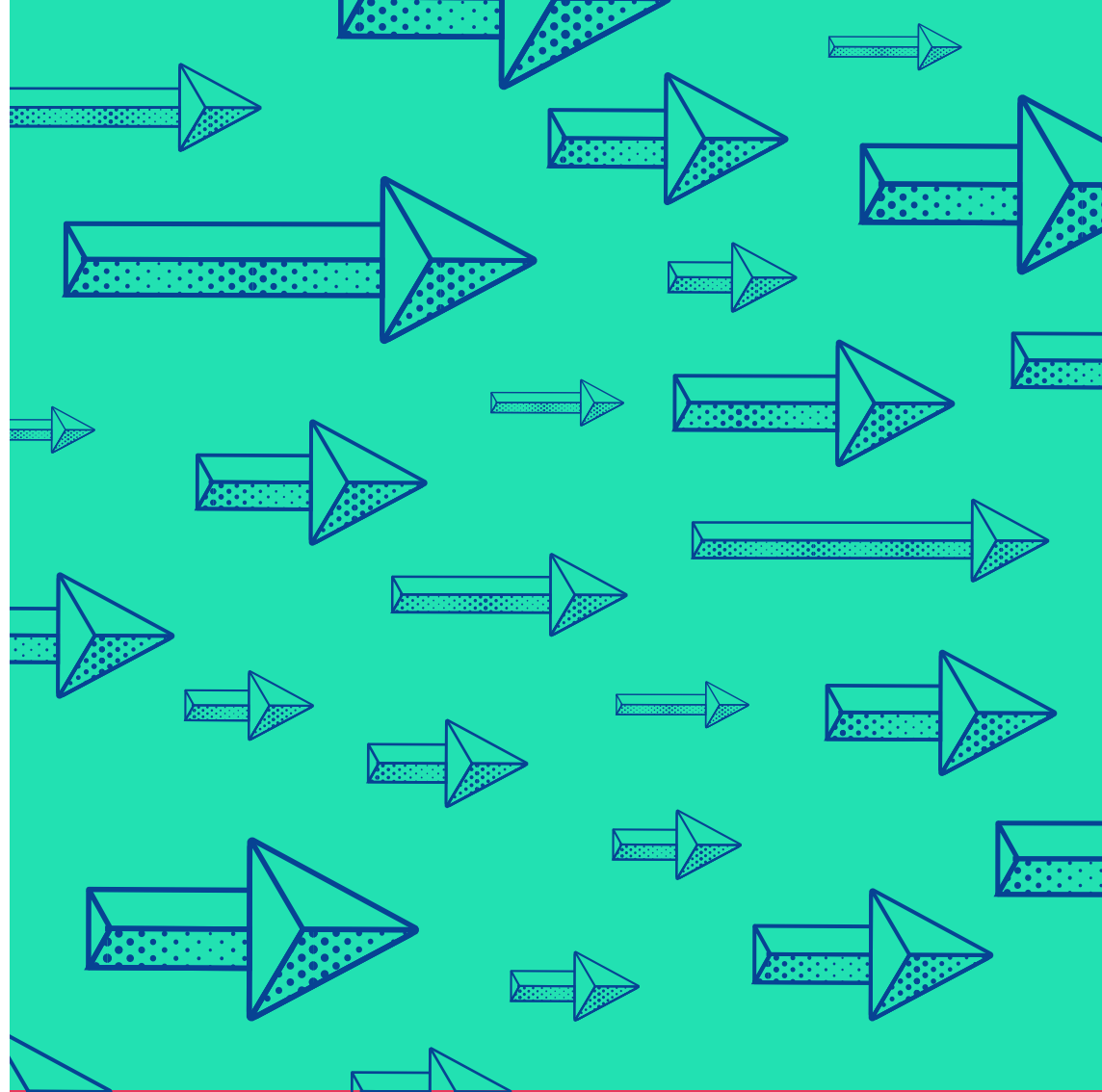
Josie worked for much of her accountancy career in public practice helping SMBs before she joined Futrli, a cloud-based financial forecasting and reporting platform for small businesses. Today, her main objective is teaching accountants how to solve clients' problems proactively rather than reactively.

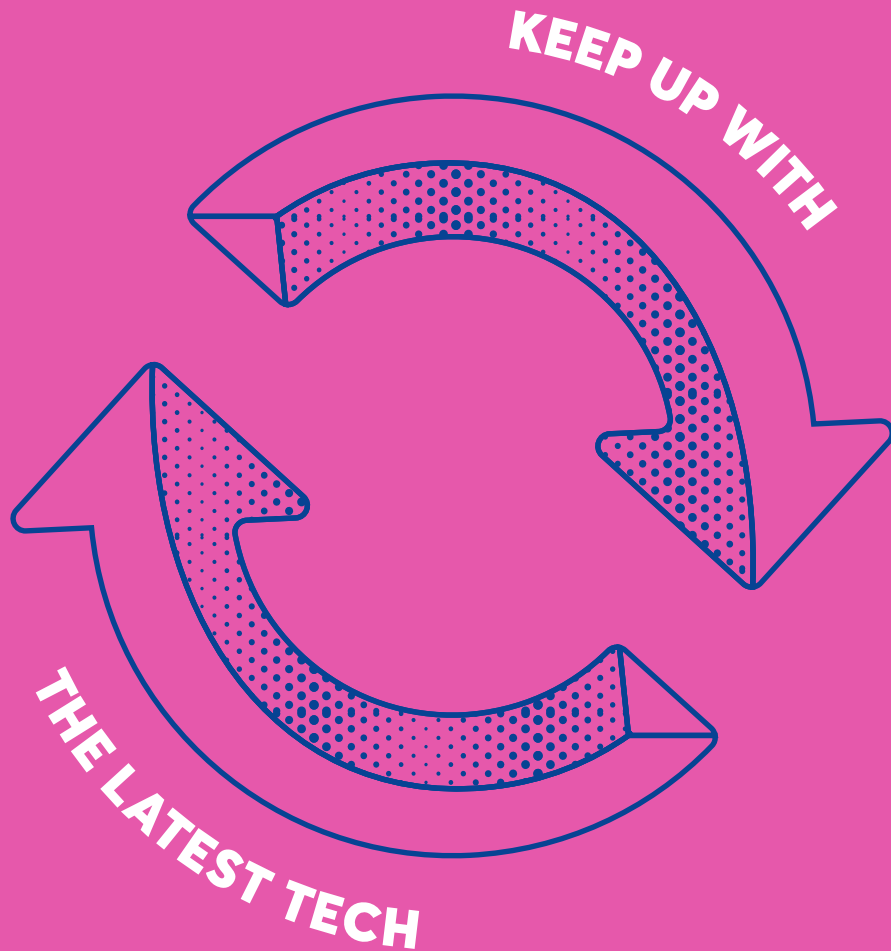
Accountants can help to educate on cash flow

She adds: "If I had to give my younger self one piece of advice, it would be to choose a job you're passionate about because we spend a great deal of our time at work. Find the things that make you happy in a role and look for roles that maximise your opportunity to do those things. After 18 years as an accountant, I took this role as head of success with Futrli because it enables me to help accountants become better business advisors, and so help even more businesses to succeed. I'm still using my accounting experience, but this job means I can help make positive change within the profession."

Josie believes that an accountant starting out today should identify what is most important in a situation in order to employ the technology that will help them – and their clients – most.

"There are so many different apps to work with, it can be overwhelming," she says. "Consider what will be the most effective at helping you to share insights with your client. Is the app proactive or reactive? Technology should be cloud-based, with the right level of support provided. And always research how compatible apps are when being used together."





Heather Smith, accountant and author of the Xero for Dummies series, says the accountancy profession must keep abreast of digital developments to remain mobile, leveraging people, processes and technology to best effect.

Through her YouTube channel, podcast and business books, Heather has educated more than one million accounting and bookkeeping advisors worldwide.

"I'm focused on helping advisors embrace the add-on marketplace," she explains. "They can work from anywhere and support clients anywhere by honing their ability to offer a range of services online."

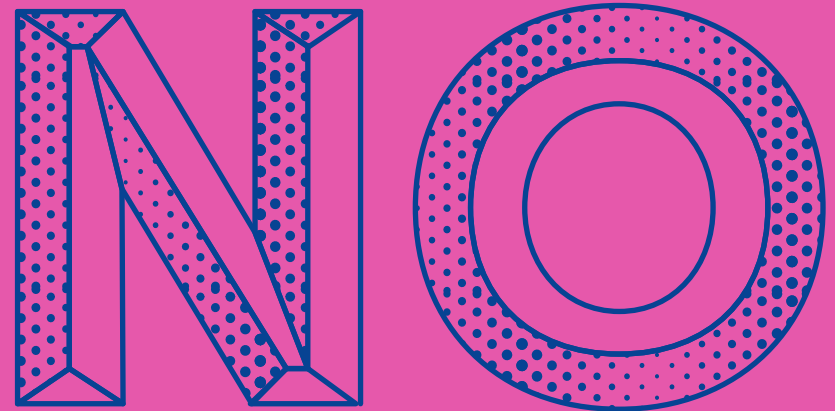
Of course, technology sits at the heart of this approach and Heather is constantly driving accountants to keep learning the latest developments on offer. "I embrace lifelong learning, I like to test new technology and I choose to surround myself with those challenging the tech frontiers so that I can learn from them," she says.

"When I learn something useful, I write about it to share it with others. This has had multiple benefits – people have commented on and enhanced what I've learnt, plus it's helped me connect with those with similar

interests and resulted in further work opportunities. I like to think my success is being able to help the accounting and bookkeeping community be successful."

However, Heather insists while professionals should be generous with their time, they should never lose sight of their skills and value. She concludes: "Givers need to learn to say 'no' because takers never do. Be kind, helpful and professional, but always think twice before giving your time away for free."

LEARN TO SAY



**(THINK TWICE BEFORE
GIVING ADVICE FOR FREE)**

BE A BETTER BUSINESS PERSON



Stepping out of your comfort zone can help you realise new opportunities, says Sarah Stein, founder of Miss Efficiency.

When Sarah set up her bookkeeping business Miss Efficiency, her motivation was to work from home and have the flexibility to build a family. Today, 16 years – and two children – later, the practice operates out of an office at Sarah’s home on the outskirts of Brisbane, relies entirely on technology and has clients right across Australia.

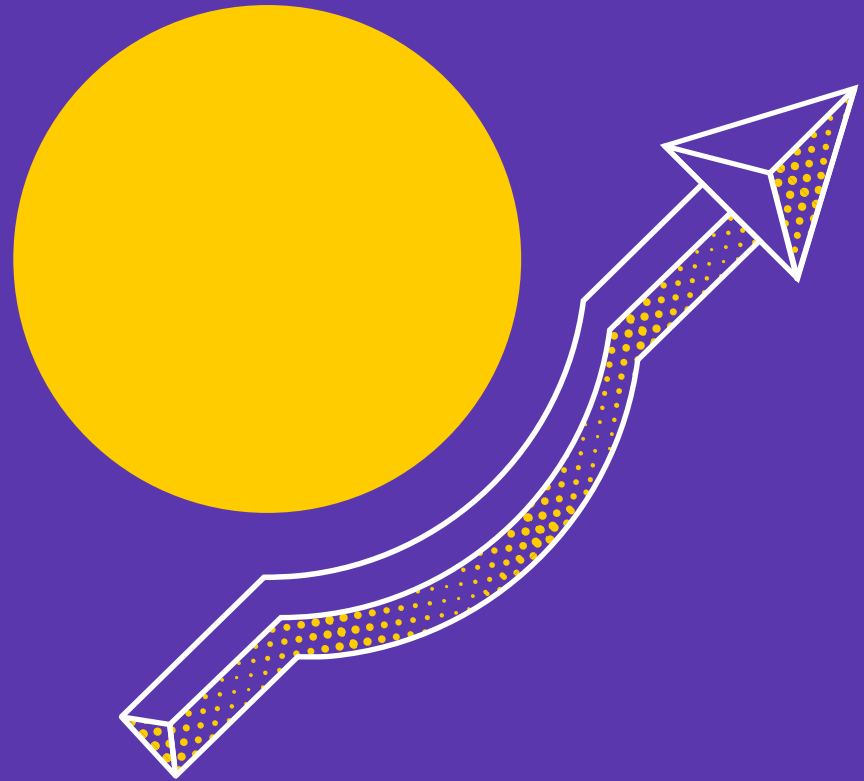
“My business looks very different from when it started,” comments Sarah. “When I started out, I was working two days on the bookkeeping and three as a court reporter. I only resigned from the reporting job after eight months when I had 50 accountancy clients. Since then, I’ve hired staff, developed the business into a franchise, continued to expand the operation, disbanded the franchise and now operate 100% in the cloud.”

Treat problems as obstacles to overcome

Sarah spends time mentoring other business people and always encourages them to test their boundaries to venture beyond what is familiar and safe.

She says: "We know more than we think we do and we can handle more than we think we can. If you don't extend yourself, you never know the opportunities you may miss out on."

She also believes strongly that it is not enough to rely on technical ability. "It doesn't matter how technically adept you are, you need to be a great business person. Without the tremendous relationships I'd developed with both clients and accountants, plus the excellent systems that we'd developed, both my business and I would have collapsed in a heap when things got difficult. As it was, we were able to treat problems as obstacles to overcome, which we always did."



Thank you to all our

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