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business & lifestyle magazine

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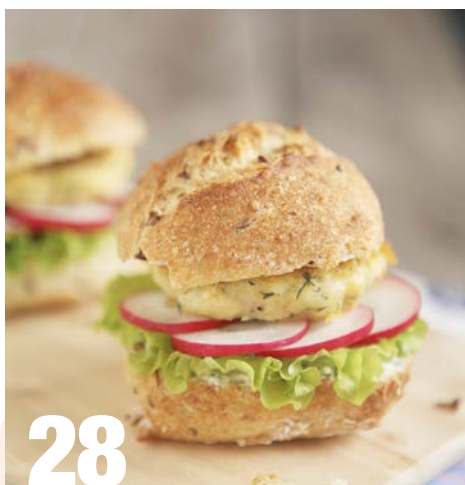
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8



24



28

contents features

GROWTH

Soul Searching Sole Trader 8

WORKPLACE

People Matter: The Formula
For Business Growth 10

MARKETING

Marketing Within Your Means 14

NETWORKING

For The Love of Networking 18

TECHNOLOGY

The Psychology of Hacking 20

LIFESTYLE

Office of Your Dreams 24



EDITOR Gina Jaaskelainen

from the editor

Welcome to the first issue of Modewest. We are very excited to present to you a fresh, new look into the encounters, experiences and golden opportunities available to all Greater Western Sydney businesses.

Modewest stands firmly on the focus of *business* and *life*. Our contributors are all business owners, and—as business owners—we know what it's like to juggle the challenges of life while running a business at the same time.

Some of us have children growing up, some of us have health concerns, some of us have just started a business and need information and direction to market and run our businesses successfully. Some of us have been in business for a longer time and are looking to expand our horizons, find new ideas or just be entertained. None of us have much time.

Modewest was created for all of us.

Modewest is a free online magazine. Our digital issues can be viewed and downloaded online from the Modewest website or you can contact us at info@modewest.com.au for more information.

In this first issue, we have articles covering a range of business and lifestyle topics—business growth and the workplace, marketing, technology, nutrition and lifestyle.

At the end of each issue we have our regular essential living article, classic film review and photo focus column.

For all the wonderful people in Greater Western Sydney, welcome to Modewest from your editor. I hope you will find Modewest an aspirational and inspirational business companion: inventive, affecting—and a joy to read.

Gina Jaaskelainen, *Editor-in-Chief*

focus

NUTRITION

Life Time: A Better Burger 28

ESSENTIAL LIVING

Melissa: Sovereign For The Brain 32

CLASSIC FILM REVIEW

The Big Screen: Kiss Me Kate 36

COLUMN

Photo Focus: Miners on Bicycles 38



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soul searching sole trader

Those of us who have launched into the life of a sole trader know why we did it—the lifestyle, the personal reward, the independence, the lack of office politics and fickle employers. But how do you make sure you have a truly viable business that will consistently deliver the income you want? **Rob Drage**, business mentor at Thexton Armstrong Drage in Faulconbridge, says that every sole trader needs to do some soul searching—and he recommends two regular review processes.

Taking a good, hard look at your business might not be every sole trader's idea of fun—it might even be terrifying—but it is essential. "The life of a sole trader can be rewarding, frustrating, exhilarating and stressful all at once," says Rob. "Part of balancing these emotions is having a thorough understanding of the business, the customers and the competition."

Rob's two review processes, the SWOT analysis and Business Definition, take time, thought and discussion to get the most benefit, and to most people they are far less exciting than just running the business. However without them, you might not be running a business at all.

"Take the time to explore each of these and be brutal with your answers," Rob says. Done well, "they should give you a clearer picture of your business, your market, your customers and your opportunities."

The Business Definition

The Business Definition comes first. It's the who, what, when, where and why of everything you do.

Below are the five attributes of any business. Answer these with a simple yes or no, but beware: Rob warns that "if any one of these five attributes is missing, then—by strict definition—you are not running a business."



The Five Attributes

1. Do I offer a repetitive product/service of value?
2. Do customers need or want my product/service?
3. Are customers willing to pay for my product/service?
4. Does my product/service meet and satisfy their needs?
5. Is there enough profit in each transaction to make it worthwhile to do again?

If you answered 'yes' to all of these—congratulations, you have a business!

If you came up with a 'don't know' anywhere, remember that two heads are better than one. Who can you ask to find out? How can you test the market?

The Five Ws

Next, you will need to drill down into the five Ws—the who, what, when, where and why—associated with each of the five attributes. Let's take attribute 3, for example, which is often a real sticking point.

Who would pay for my product/service? Be as specific as you can about your ideal customers.

What would they be willing to pay? Will your customers feel that the value of your service exceeds the price? And what should that price be?

When would they pay? Do they pay over-the-counter for an item, or do you have services for which you will charge instalments or repeat fees?

Where will they pay? Should you consider a retail outlet or an online e-commerce website? What about mobile EFTPOS for on-site delivery or market stalls?

Why will they pay? The answer to this one will also be the answer to attribute 4 above!

Here are some examples of what you might ask for each of the five attributes.

QUESTION	FIVE Ws
Do I offer a repetitive product or service of value?	What is my product or service? What makes it unique or valuable? Do I have a geographic aspect to the business?
Do customers need or want my product or services?	How do customers use/own my product? When would they require my product/service for the first time, and again? Do I modify the product to suit individual needs? Are my customers' needs changing over time? Do they have to be nearby? Is it a must-have or a nice-to-have?
Are they willing to pay?	Do customers perceive the value exceeds the price? What is my value proposition?
Does my product/service satisfy/meet their needs?	Does my product meet/exceed their requirements/expectations? Do they tell their friends/network?
Is there enough profit in each transaction to make it worthwhile to do again?	Have I priced my product to generate a desired income for me and my family? Is my price viable for the customers I am seeking?

If you find yourself struggling with the answers or just don't know where to begin, then enlist the help of someone you trust—an objective friend, a business colleague, or a mentor—to help generate ideas. We can never see ourselves the way other people can, and the same goes for our business ideas.

Swatting your SWOT

The SWOT analysis has quite a pedigree—it is usually traced back to the 1950s and two of America's finest business schools, Stanford and Harvard.

Originally the SWOT analysis was an organisational strategy process, which was, in the 1960s by Harvard Business School, developed into the tool so familiar today. Chances are, you have come across it already, and you might even consider it one of those things you know you 'should' do, but you are not entirely sure why.

"If undertaken correctly this analysis can be very beneficial, but a waste of time if not," says Rob. That could be the reason it is not used as often as you would expect. It is surprising how many businesses, even established ones, have never really 'swatted the SWOT'—that is, really pinned down their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats so that they can act

strategically to build on the S and the O and mitigate the W and the T.

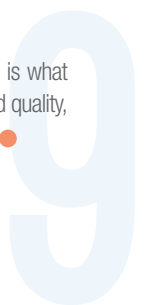
Being honest is, of course, as essential as it was for the Business Definition—and so is being precise. "Commonly the phrases 'great to deal with' or 'great customer service' are placed as strengths," Rob says. "Can I suggest that these are base-line attributes?" In other words, don't just write down the kind of easy platitudes that you, as a customer, would frown at in another company. The other secret to a good SWOT analysis is to put yourself in the shoes of your customer—and your competition.

SWOT	ASK YOURSELF
Strengths	Is my product/service unique? Do I get lots of customer referrals? Is my product/service aligned with my key customers' wants/needs? Do I hold industry certifications? Am I an expert in my field? Do I have a diverse range of clients?
Weaknesses	Can my products be copied (have I patented my idea)? Is my technology, or knowledge of the latest technologies falling behind? Do I require licences to expand my business offering that I don't have?
Opportunities	Can I respond to changing consumer/market demands? Are there new/emerging markets I have not tapped into yet? Can I up/down scale easily?
Threats	Is there growing competition in my market? Are my customers' needs changing faster than I can keep up? Is the regulatory framework in my industry changing? Do I have an exit plan in place?

There are plenty of templates available online that can help you work through and record your own SWOT analysis, but don't just go it alone. "In reality," says Rob, "if you have an experienced and objective set of eyes and ears working with you, the process has a far better chance of being meaningful and beneficial."

The Business Definition and the SWOT analysis are, of course, only the beginning—the foundation on which you can build a solid business. The next step from here, Rob says, "is to craft activities and goals into a workable plan that ensures your customers gladly tell their friends and colleagues about your business and your value proposition. That puts profitability and sustainability at the core of your business."

We might not phrase it as smartly as that, but—in the end—that is what every sole trader and small business wants. Will you choose to spend quality, soul-searching time working on your business, rather than just in it? ●



A young woman with brown hair tied back and blue eyes is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a black lace-trimmed apron over a light-colored top. She is holding two large, round, golden-brown loaves of bread. The background is a bakery with wooden shelves filled with various types of bread, including baguettes and round loaves. The text "people matter:" is in bold black, and "the formula for business growth" is in white, both overlaid on the lower half of the image.

people matter:
the formula
for business
growth

There is a hackneyed old phrase we all have heard—it is trotted out often enough by business owners, advisors and managers. *“Your people are your biggest asset”*, they chant in unison. And who has not rolled their eyes at the sound of yet another hollow platitude that makes not one iota of difference to the lives of staff and business owners? **Greg Mitchell**, Principal Consultant at HR Success in Penrith, says it is not the cliché we should listen to, but the sentiment underpinning it.

An asset—as any trusty dictionary will tell you—is a positive quality, a benefit, a thing or a skill that gives an advantage. In business, we tend to use it to talk about objects—the equipment or premises that belong to the business. And that is perhaps where the problem lies: we think of assets as sunk costs.

“I actively encourage many of the business owners and managers I work with to see their staff as one of their most critical investments,” Greg says. It is an important shift in terminology—an ‘investment’ acknowledges the cost factor and emphasises the point that you can—and should—expect a return that will outstrip the original cost.

It is not a cheap investment by any means. A study by the Society for Human Resource Management revealed that total workforce costs average nearly 70% of operating expenses for more than 700 companies surveyed. That is because it is not just salaries and wages. Superannuation, recruitment, training, insurances and other factors all take a bite from the company coffers.

As your business grows, your staff—along with you—become your ‘front line’, representing your brand, building and retaining your customer base, dealing with questions and concerns, producing your product and delivering your service.

“Recruiting the right staff—and managing them well—is critical to the success of most businesses,” says Greg. “Effectively managing staff can be a real challenge for many business owners and managers. Apart from the need to ensure compliance with an increasing raft of legislation, managing the emotions and motivations of a diverse group of people can often make people-management seem more art than science.”

Greg’s experience with businesses of all shapes and sizes over the years has produced some insights into this ‘art’. He found that companies that consistently do well at maximising the return on their investment in staff have a lot in common—a clear vision and strategy, effective leadership, and performance and accountability measurement.

The exciting part is that this is no great mystery—just mastery of some key leadership and management skills. You might rely on your people, but reaping the rewards from your workforce investment ultimately lies with you. ●

get the best from YOUR PEOPLE

A CLEAR—AND SHARED—VISION AND STRATEGY

Another cliché perhaps, but having a clear vision and strategy means knowing where you are going, and how you will get there. On that journey, it goes without saying, your staff need to be on board. Not only that, but they need to row together—and if you don’t want to lash them like Roman galley slaves, you also need their buy-in. So, they need to hear your vision and plans, and understand their part and why their contribution matters. If your heart is sinking right now, don’t feel bad—this is not an area in which Australian businesses excel. The HR Coach Research Institute found that only 22% of Australian SMEs have successfully aligned the activity of their teams to a clear business vision and strategy.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

If you want your team to buy in to your vision for the business, you have to be able to earn their confidence. As well as having essential business knowledge, skills and experience, to be an effective leader you need to be authentic, personally engaging, consistent and able to purposefully grow and guide individual staff members—and teams. Some people are naturally skilled in leadership. For those of us that are not, leadership or management training is a worthwhile investment.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS


Your people need to know what you expect of them—not just so they know what specific tasks their job entails, but also so that you can give them the recognition they deserve for a job well done, and nip any problems in the bud. Position descriptions, induction programs, performance reviews, and staff recognition and reward programs all help to ensure everyone is on the same page.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Expectations sound great on paper—but to make them a reality you need a culture of accountability. For accountability to work you need to be able to measure how well your staff are meeting your expectations—and you need to partner that with appropriate consequences. Reward the successes and improve below-par performance with coaching, performance reviews or compulsory training.


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1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree

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I smile while commuting to work	
I have income to support my desired lifestyle	
I have plans for growing my business	
I manage people well and get the most out of my staff	
I understand my financial break even point	
I know my cash flow and can easily pay my bills	
I have effective marketing and easily win new clients	
I receive referrals from happy customers	
I have time for family, friends and holidays	
I always challenge myself to improve performance	
YOUR SCORE	

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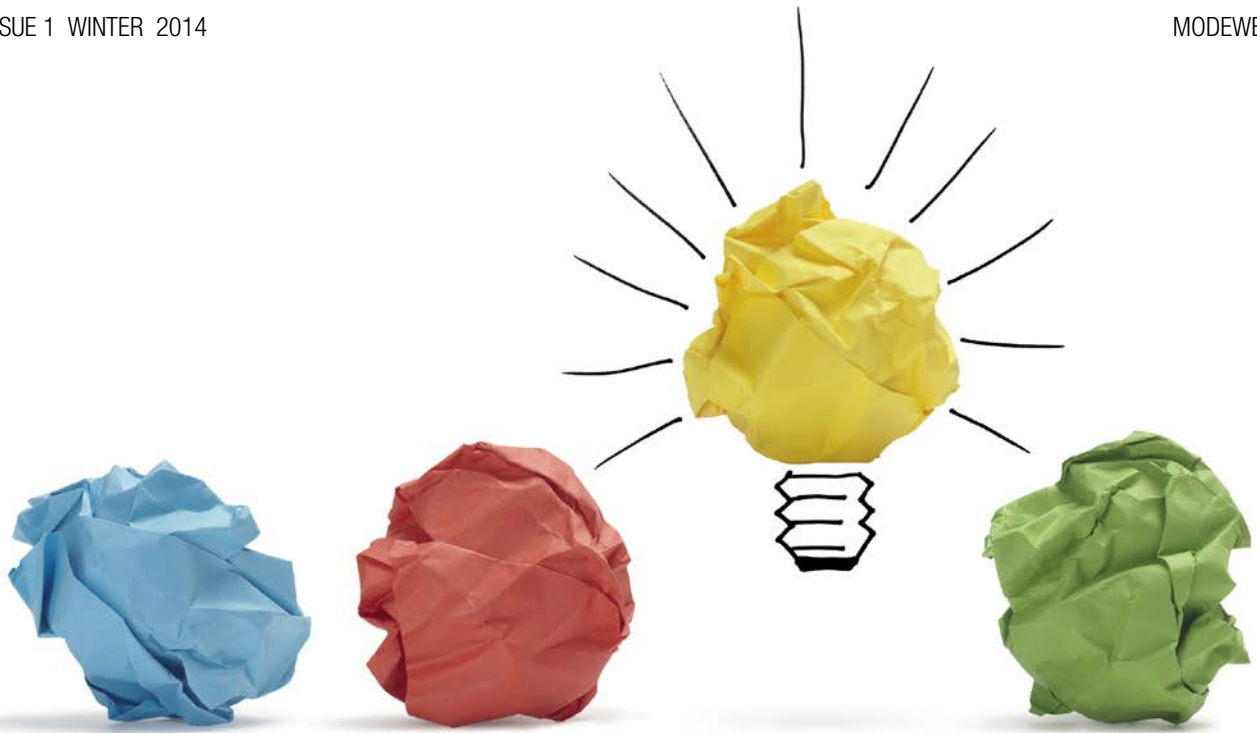
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marketing within your means

Getting the most out of the money you spend on your business is likely to be one of your top priorities—when you are a sole trader or a small business owner, you really cannot afford to waste a cent. When it comes to marketing your business, how can you be sure that the money you spend is worthwhile? Marketing consultant **Naomi Cheeseman**, of Paryn at Mount Riverview, says the savvy small business owner has plenty of options at his or her disposal—and some of them are free!



The key to getting the most out of your marketing is, however, quite simple: make sure the value you get out of your investment is greater than the money and effort you spent on it.

“You need to identify how much money you have to spare for your marketing and then be smart with how you use it,” says Naomi. “You cannot possibly keep up with every new marketing avenue out there, but you can pick and choose where you will dedicate your limited time and money.”

When you are starting a new business, marketing can seem like one of the dark arts. How do you choose the best methods of marketing and which channels do you use? How do you know what will work?

Here are Naomi's key recommendations.

1. Target your audience

There is no point putting up a billboard in Newcastle if your ideal customer is in Western Sydney. It seems obvious, but think about all the different ways that concept can be applied.

Are you advertising in the newspaper to people who spend a lot of time in the car, listening to the radio? Are you tweeting and facebooking your heart out to customers who can barely find your website? Do your customers want to see your product demonstrated before they buy?

Knowing who your customers are—and what they need to know about your product or service before they buy—is vital if you are going to target your marketing successfully.

2. Test, and test again

Monitoring and measuring is a critical part of small business success. When resources are limited it is even more important to be sure they are invested wisely. Testing whether particular pieces of marketing are paying off will always save you money—it will allow you to invest more in the areas that are working, and stop spending in the ones that aren't.

If you are advertising across several mediums, having a different special offer for each medium—and a landing page on your website for each ad—is an excellent way to monitor effectiveness. "Google Analytics makes it easy to monitor the number of visitors to each page," says Naomi. "You can also create a checklist so that you and your staff can record which offer is being redeemed when a phone or email enquiry comes in."

You can also simply ask new customers where they heard about you—just remember that concrete records of where the leads are coming from are infinitely preferable to 'guesstimating'.

3. Spend time, not money

Don't overlook the free marketing you can do. Can you print some low-cost flyers and leave them where your customers go? Can you put your business card where your customers purchase related products? If you make hats, for example, you might ask a local dress shop to keep your cards on the counter.

Also don't forget that most social media platforms are free; and if your customers are likely to be using them, you should be too. "Wherever your customers are, you need to be there—contributing to those conversations."

A recent report commissioned by Sensis found that nearly two thirds of small to medium business were not using social media at all. Naomi noted that "very few are using Google+ (only 2%), which is incredible given that it is owned by the most powerful global search engine."

4. Remember, talk is free

Best of all, word of mouth is still the best way to get referrals. It costs you nothing to have your positive 'elevator pitch' ready for when people ask what you do.

It doesn't have to be 'salesy'—even at networking events, being able to speak naturally about what you do for a few minutes will always have more impact than a formal sales pitch.

5. Start small, and keep adjusting

Not biting off more than you can chew is more than just a saying. It's a key factor in planning and testing your marketing.

"Take baby steps," says Naomi. "Plan and test your marketing three months at a time—trailing different mediums—so that if something doesn't work you know quickly and can make adjustments."

Starting small also helps take the 'overwhelm factor' out of marketing. With so many options, it can be hard to know what to do and when. "What I don't advocate is trying to be everywhere," Naomi warns. "It is not practical and it is just too stressful. Targeting your marketing selectively means you can dedicate 100% of your limited marketing time only to those mediums that work, and that deliver value exceeding your input."

There aren't many areas of life where you can genuinely reap much more than you sow, but with a strong knowledge of your customers, a targeted and testable short-term marketing plan, and a willingness to spend time rather than money, you can make sure you get maximum return for your marketing investment. ●

get the most for YOUR MONEY

FIND THE FREEBIES

List your business on free business listings and directories, post flyers on community notice boards and leave your cards (in a holder) in places your customers are likely to be.

WORK THE INTERNET

Take the time to set up free social media accounts and populate your profiles with descriptive text, images and updates. Pick the ones your clients use, and use Google My Business—Google's new tool to connect you directly to your customers on Google Search, Google Maps or Google+.

DOUBLE DIP ON PRINT ADS

Find out if you can provide your local paper with a press release or editorial to go with your ad—especially if they run regular 'themed' sections.

FILL THE AIRWAVES

Radio is very effective, and you can negotiate with stations to buy filler spots—usually in late night programs, when a surprising number of people are listening—at a reduced rate.

PICK THE WINNERS

Trial different mediums for three months—and monitor how well they perform—so that you can focus on the ones that give you the best value and return on your investment.

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More open



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Naomi Cheeseman
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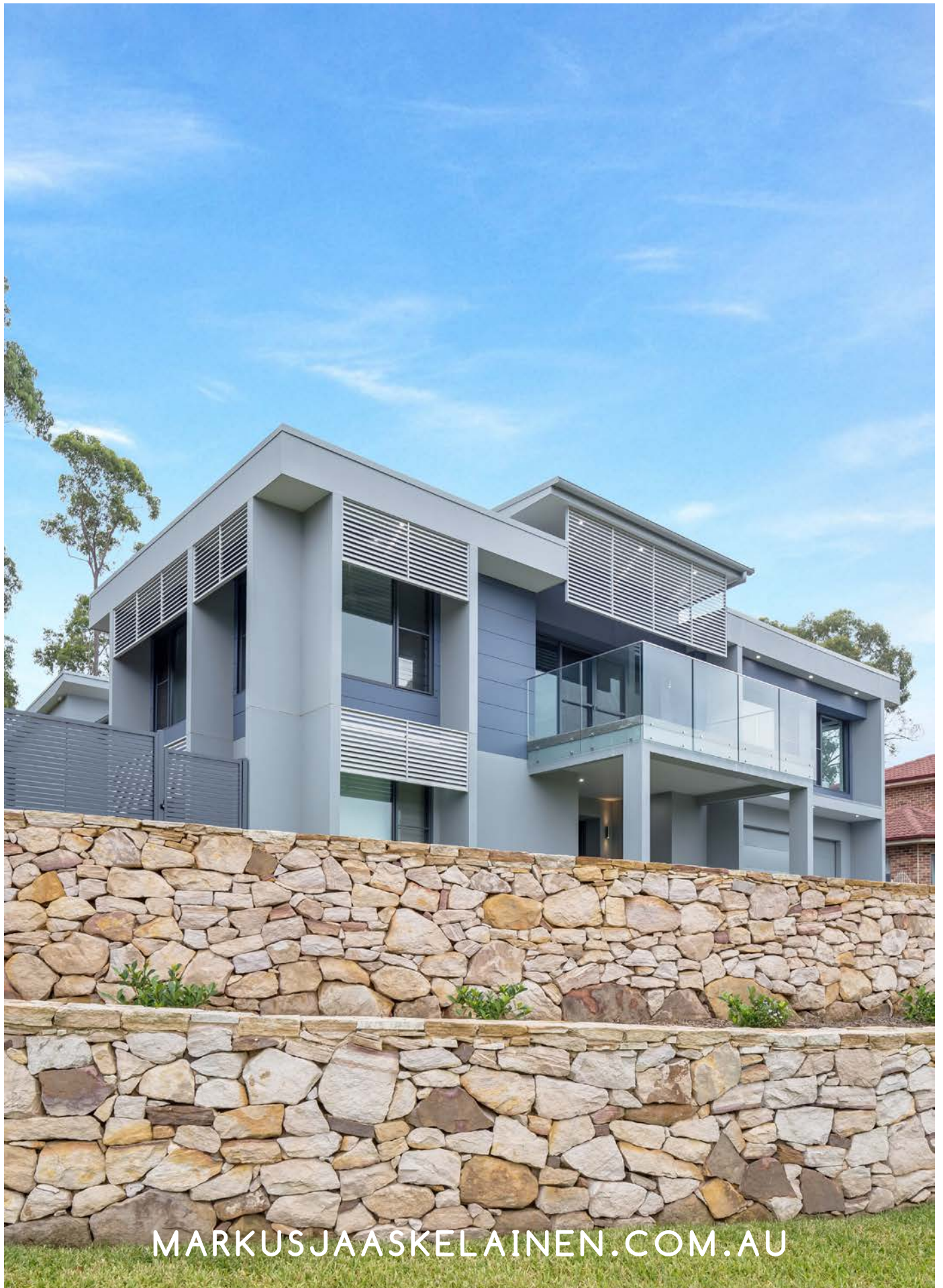
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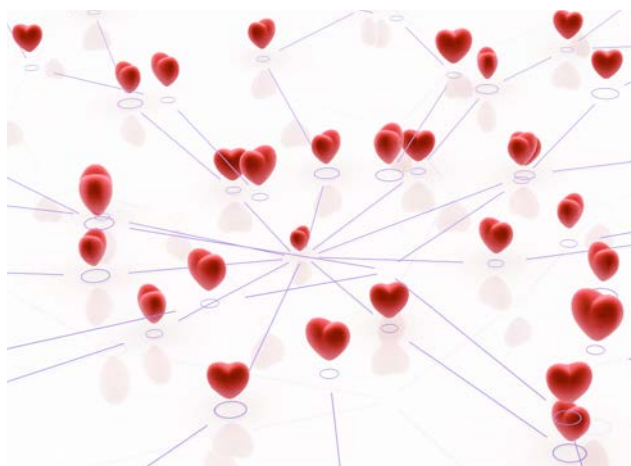
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for the love of networking



You know it's a good idea. You know it's the best way to get leads—if you do it right. So you go along, receive a greeting and a name badge from a too-smiley organiser, turn to face a roomful of people and think, *“why am I here? I hate these things!”* If this is you at a networking event, you are not alone. We asked **Andrea Turner-Boys**, convener of the networking group Women with Altitude, for her best networking tips.

Andrea invites a lot of people to networking events in her job, and she often sees the cringe when she does—or the flat-out squawk of horror that is many people's response.

There are plenty of reasons for that kind of reaction. There is the anxiety of going in the first place. There is the ‘elevator pitch’—that 40 seconds of words that you wish were so much smarter, so much more succinct, so much easier to remember.

Then there is the prospect of a room full of strangers you need to talk to without feeling like the uninvited guest—or the room full of cliques.

And in the end, you have a pile of business cards and no idea what to do next.

“If you can move through the fear,” says Andrea, “there are really great opportunities to be had at these events. Networking is a great marketing tool.” So, what are those opportunities?

People do business with people they like

Think about it. If you have a client that needs a service, which business would you refer them to—the one you just looked up in the local business directory, or the one where you know the service-provider personally? By building relationships with other business people, you are actually building a sales force for your own business. And it's reciprocal—you also build a network of trusted providers for your own clients. Your clients then come to trust you as the go-to person, not only for what you offer but also for what your network offers.

One person leads to many

When you shake hands with the next person and they tell you what they do, reserve your judgement. Even if you cannot see how they could ever need your services—or you theirs—you have no idea who they know, or the extent of their network. “I have a colleague who doesn't use my services, but is a wonderful advocate of my business and refers people all the time,” says Andrea. So look beyond the immediate person and potential leads and clients in the room, and focus instead on sharing information and building rapport.

Return on investment

It costs a lot of money to acquire new clients through marketing and other ‘cold’ sales strategies. “Networking events are a low cost per acquisition for generating leads and converting customers,” says Andrea. “Referrals through relationships are an important strategy for growing your business.” With a well-developed network, you can also look at more formal arrangements such as partnerships, collaborations and cross-referral agreements.

Where your market is

Networking events are great places to grow your customer base. “If you sell to women, for example,” Andrea says, “head to women's networks and start there.” It makes sense to spend your time where your potential customers are spending their time. “I'm constantly surprised by the number of retailers whose core customer base is women, but they don't spend any time at women's events. They are missing a huge opportunity!”

Chances are, you already knew at least some of these great reasons for networking, but it does not always help when you are on the spot, your mind going blank—once again—as you shake the tenth hand of the evening.

So, what strategies does Andrea suggest for overcoming the angst, and getting the most out of networking?

Here are just six things to remember—and even the shyest, most nervous networker can put them into practice.

6 TIPS for successful networking



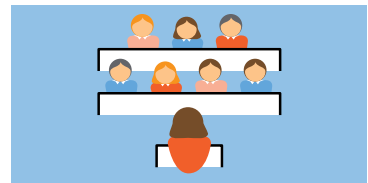
smile

The old saying that “when you smile, the world smiles with you” is so true—a smiling person will attract other smiles and, at a networking event, that is sure to lead quickly to a conversation. It is also true that the spirit of you shines through your face when you smile, and that is what you want people to remember.



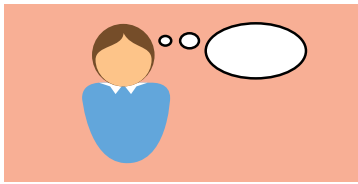
ask

People like other people to take an interest in them—networking is not just about you talking, it is also about you listening. Asking questions not only keeps the conversation flowing, it also builds rapport.



choose

There are lots of events you could go to—but you should not necessarily go to all of them. Choose the networks that align with your values—especially if you are anxious. Look for a speaker you want to hear, a group that seems friendly or one that proactively welcomes new members.



prepare

Take the time to think about your elevator pitch—and try it out. Say it aloud, say it to someone who you know can give you honest feedback, and know it well. Make sure too that you are stocked up on business cards and anything else you wish to give to people you meet.



pair up

Think about going with a friend for moral support. It can be great to have a friendly face to turn to, especially if you are very nervous. Be wary, however, of spending your entire evening talking to them—that's not the point!



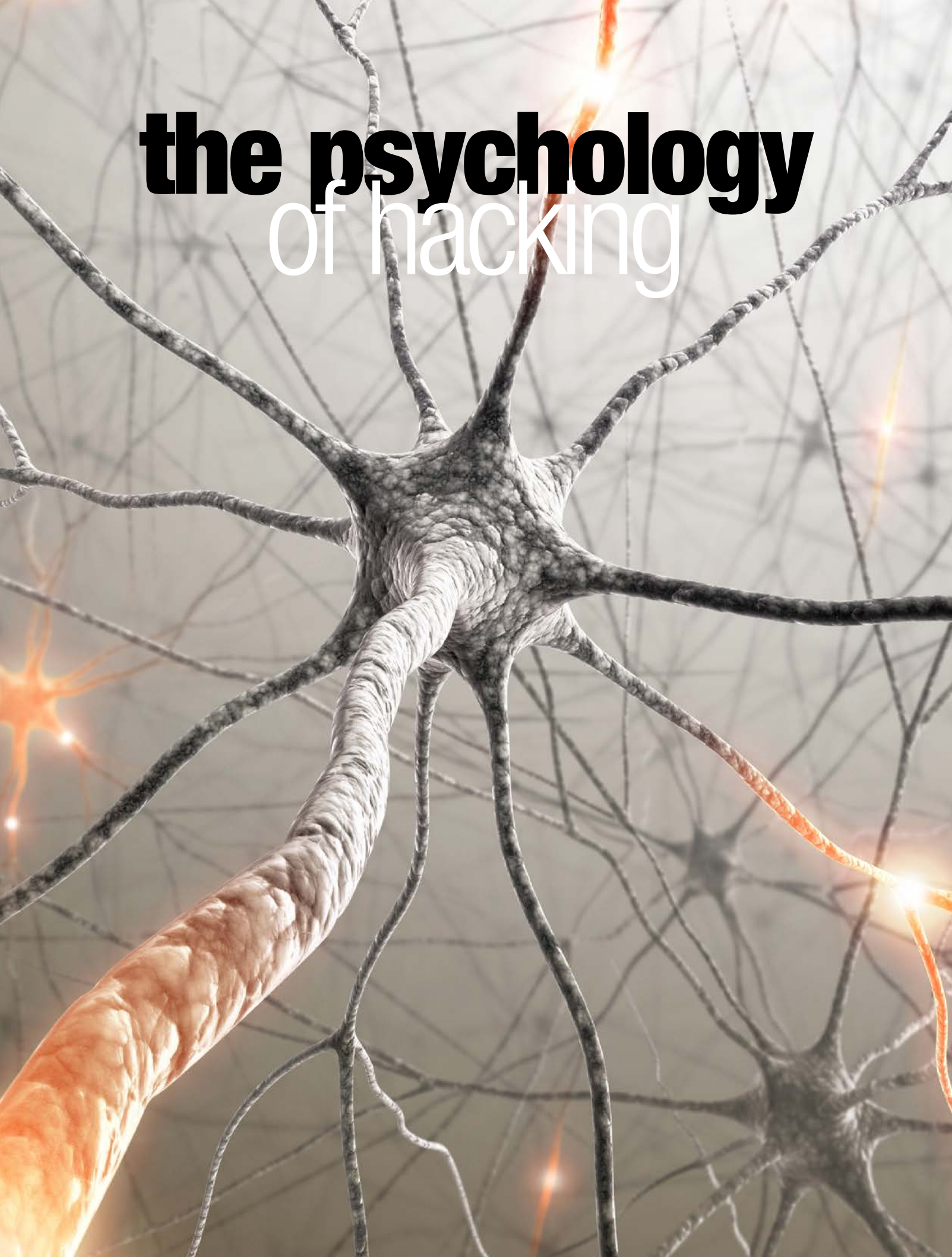
follow up

Don't just leave all those business cards in a pile on your desk the next day. Take the time, within a few days of the event, to file the cards in whatever system you have for managing contacts—be that a phone address book or a business card box. Send these contacts a quick email saying it was nice to meet them, and arrange to meet again with anyone you particularly liked.

That is really all there is to it. But Andrea also has one very sensible reminder: be patient. “I often hear people say they went to one or two networking events and nothing happened for them, in terms of getting new clients,” she says. “Relationships are built over time, so you need to go regularly and build up rapport.”

Perseverance, and honing your networking skills—just as you would any other business skill—pays off. With one eye firmly fixed on connecting meaningfully with the person in front of you, and the other on the opportunities this encounter might bring, you can overcome the dread of networking—and, who knows, you might even volunteer before you are asked! ●

the psychology of hacking



“Yes, I am a criminal. My crime is that of curiosity. My crime is that of judging people by what they say and think, not what they look like. My crime is that of outsmarting you, something that you will never forgive me for.” So said a 21-year-old hacker known as ‘The Mentor’, Lloyd Blankenship, in 1986, in an article that has gone on to become known as the hacker’s ‘manifesto’. With companies now under daily threat from hackers and our online credit card and banking details constantly liable to theft, have today’s hackers anything in common with the idealistic youth who were on the cutting edge of technology almost 40 years ago? **Simon Morse**, IT security and risk specialist at Armorez in Leura reminds us that they do.

They called it ‘phreaking’

Back before he met Steve Jobs at university, Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak was a hacker. He and a legion of other creative, tech-savvy youngsters used a very low-tech method—whistling at a specific frequency—to reset long distance telephone lines and make free, untraceable calls.

It wasn’t called hacking then, they called it ‘phreaking’. Wozniak built a small piece of equipment known as a ‘blue box’ and sold it to his peers—an early example of the electronic engineering creativity that would see him build the first Apple computers. It was a bit of counter-culture fun; his most legendary blue-box prank was to call up the Vatican, pretending to be Henry Kissinger.

Wozniak, Jobs and their peers like Bill Gates came of age at the end of one era and the beginning of another. It was the late 1960s and early 1970s. This time had seen the hippie movement attempt to challenge the old world order of war and suspicion, promoting instead peaceful political activism, love and individual freedom.

The Internet Age

The new computer technology was—the young geeks thought—way too cool, and socially radical, to be controlled by big business and government—a case in point being the internet itself. The internet began as ARPA-Net, a US Defence communications system that was not controlled centrally and

would automatically reroute data through the network, even if part of it was destroyed. It was a Cold War project, designed to survive a nuclear strike. By the early 1970s, so much traffic on the network was personal chatter between users that US Defence relinquished control, and the public internet was born.

The new graduates poised to be the engineers, programmers and software developers of the computer age were, of course, influenced by the political idealism of their time, and the new technology was a new social frontier. People like Wozniak, Jobs and Gates weren’t just thinking outside the square, they were democratising technology. The companies they built were not like mainstream companies, and—by the time the huge, speculative investment of the ‘dotcom boom’ arrived in the early 1990s—there were some creative workplaces employing a new generation of geeks.



Silicon Valley

Simon remembers a friend who was working in San Francisco’s ‘Silicon Valley’ at that time. He recalled hammocks outside buildings for employees, and posts out the front specifically designed for their pets to be tied up. If you did not want to bring your pets to your desk, both you and your pets were accommodated. Simon points out that “this non-conformist thinking from the west coast of America was key in giving us some of the more elegant design development improvements we have seen from companies such as Apple.”

Simon also notes that “with the exception of a few players like Google and Amazon, most of this wave of innovation went bust or got gobbled up by the big players once the money dried up. It does, however, illustrate the strain of avant-garde curiosity—and sense of downright mischief—that is still a major driving force in the IT industry.”

In the 1980s, a decade after Jobs and Wozniak set up Apple, hackers enjoyed a spot of Hollywood fame. The 1983 movie *War Games*, which starred a young Matthew Broderick as David Lightman, was about a bright kid who is too smart for school and ends up accidentally hacking into the US Department of Defence’s new computer-controlled missile system and almost starting World War III. It was a movie that explored both the danger of ‘old school’ government boffins trusting too much in technology, and the ability of the latest generation of computer gamers to outsmart not just them, but the technology itself.



A whistle and a phone line

The same year War Games came out, real-life hacker Kevin Mitnick was arrested for trying to access the Pentagon's mainframes deliberately—via ARPA-Net. He was 20 and, by the time he was arrested and jailed for the last time in 1999, the myth around him had grown to hysterical proportions that borrowed a bit from Hollywood and a bit from hacking history—the press reported him to be capable of starting World War III with nothing more than a whistle and a phone line. Yet, in various interviews, Mitnick says his best hack was to take control of the drive-through speaker at his local McDonalds and tell customers that the burger chain now only sold tacos, or that the drive-through's weight detection system had found the car was too heavy and that the occupants should order a salad instead!

A new kind of revolution

For some, hacking might have just been a way to show off with brilliant pranks—but it was always a counter-culture activity. Being able to roam free through the virtual worlds inside computers was like a new kind of revolution in the 1970s and 80s.

In many ways, that is still the philosophy espoused by today's hackers, but then, as now, the criminal element cannot be ignored.

Blue box technology was a boon for drug traffickers in the 1970s, and today's criminal hackers can make their millions 'phishing' for our bank logins, 'skimming' our credit cards, and holding corporate data for ransom.

Today 'hacking' is a dirty word

"Although some civil libertarians may support 'hacktivism' as a non-violent form of protest, by and large hacking is a dirty word now." Says Simon. "Every month or so there will be a mainstream news media story about some sort of criminal gang that has systematically ripped off consumers, small businesses or banks. Often the scale of these scams run into the millions and a large part of my day to day job is to help organisations assess how likely these sorts of events are, and devise ways to prevent, detect and react."

The old adage that to catch a crook you have to think like a crook is no less true in the world of cybercrime—indeed Kevin Mitnick himself is today a top IT security consultant. Groups like Wikileaks or Anonymous are the public face of hacking, which is now seen, at best, as a danger to our personal information, and, at worst, a 'terrorist' threat to national security. But, as Wikileaks in particular shows, the activities of the current generation of 'phreaks' still has a sizeable streak of counter-culture protest—a 'hacktivism' that challenges the data collection and surveillance activities of corporations and governments.

"I think the term 'hacking' is beyond rehabilitation now," says Simon, "but it is worth remembering that it wasn't always this way. In the early days, to be called a hacker was a mark of respect from your peers—it meant that you were good at your job, in a creative way. So before we categorise all hackers as criminal masterminds, take a moment to consider how creative IT thinking has enhanced our world. Every time you use your smart phone, use a search engine or email, you are using technology developed by hackers—and its always-improving security is also, ironically, thanks to hacking." ●

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Simon Morse is one of Australia's foremost IT Security & Risk specialists, having worked with major Australian organisations such as Macquarie Bank, Suncorp Microsystems, IBM, MLC Lend Lease and National Australia Bank to name a few.

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office of your dreams

It's the place we spend all our working lives, which, for many of us, is more hours of the day and more days of the week than we spend at home. And yet, while we take care that our homes are comfortable, practical and attractive, few of us think of making our offices equally 'liveable'. **Rachel Morse**, principal consultant and interior stylist at Colour on Location in Leura has some great tips for creating the workspace of your dreams—whatever your budget.

American interior designer Albert Hadley said, "Make your home as comfortable and attractive as possible and then get on with living."

"Hadley's advice could just as easily apply to a work space," Rachel says. "Make your office as comfortable and attractive as possible and then do what you are there to do." Having an office that makes us feel like we are 'in our element' is an easily overlooked part of the workplace environment. We might have thought about desk ergonomics to make sure we don't injure ourselves just sitting at our desks, we might have thought about lighting and even about WH&S in terms of filing cabinets and trailing cables. (You haven't? Well, as you implement some of Rachel's ideas for bringing life to your workplace, how about you look at those too?)

Some of us might even have had the pleasure of working in a funky office and know first-hand the difference it can make. Just having interesting and pleasant things to rest the eyes on when staring into space, getting the next idea or composing an email, can make the difference between feeling inspired and motivated—or flat and desperate to escape. But where to start?

"The workplace needs to be in line with your branding (the 'personality' of your business), or—if you have a home office—in line with your professional personality," says Rachel.

The style of your business

The best place to start is by thinking about the same kinds of things you considered when selecting the colours and style of your logo, business cards or website. What colours do you use? What typeface do you use? Is the general feel formal or casual, classic or contemporary?

The style of your particular business might be flowing and floral, with lots of white space and one or two pastel colours; it might be bold with strong, vibrant colour, straight lines and a chunky font.

Rachel suggests imagining your business as a person, and imagining what that person would wear, the music they would like, the colours and artwork they would favour—even what TV programs or films they might watch. If you are a sole trader this is possibly an easier exercise if you are the personality of your business. However—for some business owners—the personality of your business may not be the same as your own, and the one in the workplace may be a different person altogether from the one curled up on the sofa on a Sunday afternoon.

"If you find it difficult to describe who your business is in this way, then start with who your business is not—the things you want to avoid in your work environment; for example a particular colour or shade you dislike or a feeling that you do not want to convey to clients."

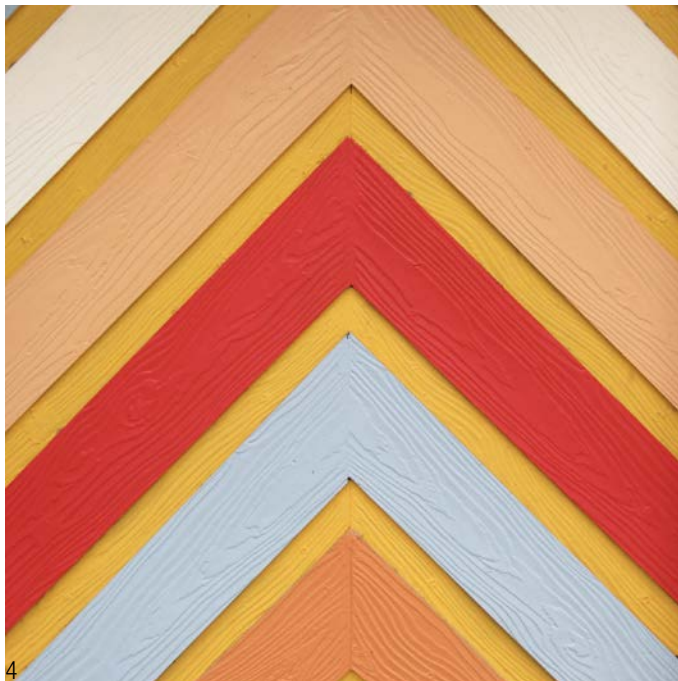
Once you have your business' style in mind, it is easier to visualise what kind of office that 'person' would thrive in. "This type of profiling is incredibly helpful," says Rachel. "Knowing your business' style saves time and, importantly, money, because you will not be buying items or investing in interior design—or even renting office space—that is simply wrong."

Creating the office of your dreams on a budget

Rachel's six basic tips for making your office more like the office of your dreams are very budget friendly.

1. De-clutter your workspace

This almost goes without saying, but a cluttered workspace really does contribute to a cluttered mind. Take a good look at what's on your desk: do you really need all of that 'at hand'? Can some of it go on a cork board or magnetic whiteboard? Do you need a vertical rack rather than a stacked 'in' tray? Does your office need a good tidy?



2. Streamline your existing work areas

Is the positioning of some of your office equipment awkward or unsightly? Could a small investment in a shelving unit make a big difference? Could an extension cord—strategically and safely hidden—mean your desk can be closer to the window to catch more natural light?

3. Choose accessories that fit your style

While you are de-cluttering and streamlining you may find you need things like a business card box, slipcases or a vertical desk-filing system. Buy with an eye to attractiveness as well as functionality—they may cost a little more than the drab grey ‘value’ items, but surrounding yourself with things you like to look at truly adds value to your workplace health.

4. Invest in plants

Live plants help oxygenate the room, drink in all the unhealthy carbon dioxide and provide colour and comfort, however even a dried or good quality artificial arrangement will brighten your space.

5. Hang more than just your business name

Style your space with awards or qualifications you have achieved—even if you don’t meet clients in your office. They can be a wonderful boost on days when you wonder if you really have it in you. Include one or two pieces of artwork that you like. They need not be expensive, just nice to look at and in line with your business’ style.

6. Colour your world

Look at the walls and floor—can you paint or wallpaper a wall? Can you change the carpet or put down a rug? Can you invest in nicer blinds (or just clean them!)? Stick to a limited colour palette (2–3 colours at most, one of which should be neutral), and, if possible, stick to your brand colours.

If you aren’t sure just what will suit your space, start small—a few items as your budget allows. “The secret is to know your business’ style. Then you can choose a few items or an entire fit-out to suit that exact style,” says Rachel. Once you start to think about how you can transform your workplace in the same way you might think about your living spaces, your imagination really is the only limit—and the office of your dreams is well worth the investment. ●

TIPS for transforming your office space ON ANY BUDGET!

ITEM	\$	\$\$	\$\$\$
Walls	Paint or wallpaper, carefully chosen to suit the space, on a feature wall	Paint or wallpaper, more expensive or on more walls (2–3 colours)	Complete redecoration—perhaps hire an interior decorator
Hangings	Low-cost art (charity shops, local art shows, garage sales, etc.) Your qualifications or awards, in nice frames	Larger, or better, artwork—choose carefully to suit your style and space	Commissioned artwork (don’t forget local artists!)
Floors	Low-cost rugs (remember to anchor suitably to prevent trip-hazards)	Change the carpet, or invest in larger or better quality rugs	Bespoke rugs and/or carpeting, polished wood, parquet or concrete floors
Lighting	Bulbs that give better light Add shades to diffuse light and create a feature	Additional lighting, perhaps floor lamps or wall lamps Clean or replace blinds	Replace strip-lighting or invest in designer fittings New blinds, and not just the usual louvres
Furnishings	Clean/repaint existing items Fix/replace broken items Add some cushions	Reupholster/repaint existing furniture Replace some key pieces	Custom-designed carpentry Stylish ergonomic chairs Feature fabrics and cushions
Accessories	Pot plants or artificial arrangements	Larger plants (depending on space)	Hired and managed plants or floral arrangements

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life time: a better burger



We all have the intention to eat healthy, right? The knowledge is there, the healthy options are available, the consequences of failure writ large in the obesity statistics... but what do we do when we're short on time and inspiration—and just in need of something comforting and quick? Penrith-based nutritionist **Jane Hutchens** at Lemongrove Road Holistic Health asked her typical Aussie male partner that question. “Tell them to buy better burgers,” he said. Be thankful—there is such a thing as a healthy burger!

Burger purists will tell you that a hamburger is a single 100% beef patty sandwiched in a soft bread bun, typically with lettuce and onion, and with optional (and much argued over) condiments, like tomato or barbecue sauce or mayonnaise, pickles, cheese, bacon or tomato. Australian purists might also insist on a slice of beetroot—a thing that would horrify most other nations' purists.

Non-purists will happily add almost anything else to the basic recipe—and experiment with all kinds of non-beef patties like chicken or fish, and veggie options like falafel, lentil or tofu. Jamie Oliver does one with a grilled field mushroom—check out the receipt link on the Modewest Facebook page.

Even the traditional ones are not technically unhealthy, says Jane. “Generally, a lean beef patty in the optimum weight range of 100–150g has just 146 calories—6% of the recommended daily intake (RDI), 6.8g of fat (10% of RDI) and 100mg of sodium (also about 10% of RDI).”

So how can you go wrong?

Well... there are burgers and then there are ‘burgers’.

The Good

The best bet, says Jane, is to build your own burger. “That way you have control over what goes into it.”

“Pay a little more for high-grade meat and have lean, pure meat patties. The patties can be fish, beef, chicken, lamb and turkey—as long as they're not bulked up with breadcrumbs and have no added salt, MSG, sugar or other flavourings. If you really love your burgers as an eat out option, then do a bit of homework and find out which burger vendors only use pure patties—or experiment with a vegetarian patty.”

The New York Times recently looked at the perfect burger, and their recommendations were: 100% coarse-ground beef patties of between 85g and 200g, handled as little as possible, cooked from cold and with 20–25% fat—no more, no less—and cooked on a griddle. Jane recommends between 10 and 20% fat and cooking on a grill pan or BBQ to allow the fat to drain off. But, she says, “avoid squishing the patty as that will dry it out.”

It's also important to buy locally—the less your meat has been travelled and stored, the more nutrients and flavour it will have—and that goes for the lettuce and other additions too.

Bun choice can make a huge difference to the health of your burger. “The bun is where most of the salt hides in a burger,” says Jane, “and often has preservatives and sugar too. Choose a healthy option such as wholegrain or rye rather than a generic white bun.”

Better still, she says, dispense with the bun altogether. “Just layer a big lettuce leaf, your patty, tomato, grilled onion and beetroot. If you want to ease into this idea, start with having half a bun and present it on your plate as an open burger.”

Plenty of vegetables, either in or with your delicious burger, will also give you a properly balanced meal—remember, the recommendation is to have a balance of the five food groups every day. “A regular burger would be lucky to have one serve of veg,” says Jane, “so have a side salad with your burger, or make sure you catch up by snacking on a carrot and hummus, or a cup of veggie soup—or having loads of salad or steamed veg with your next meal.”

The Bad

Any burger that has more calories, fat or sodium than you should have in one day is obviously a real no-no. And they're out there.

Now that burger chains have made their nutrition information available, it's perfectly possible to steer clear of burgers that take up a big chunk—if not all—of your RDI. For example, a McDonald's Mighty Angus Burger will deliver more than 70% of your daily fat allowance and about 80% of your sodium allowance. A Hungry Jack's Ultimate Double Whopper has 30% more fat than you need in an entire day and over 15% more sodium. And, anything stacked high with bacon, egg, cheese or hash browns is much, much worse.

“Come to think of it,” Jane says, “any burger with a ridiculous name is probably not going to be good for you.”

The Ugly

They say the road to hell is paved with 'good' intentions, and this bizarre burger may just prove that point. Last year the world's most expensive burger was eaten in London and it cost the equivalent of \$385,000 to make. Why? Because it was 'cultured beef'—grown in a laboratory from cow stem cells. It had to be coloured with beetroot and saffron to make it look like beef, and none of the tasters mentioned whether it tasted good—though they did agree that it was meat-like.

The scientist behind the 'Frankenburger', Dr Mark Post of Maastricht University, actually wants to find a way to reduce the environmental impact of

meat production. "Cows are very inefficient—they require 100g of vegetable protein to produce only 15g of edible animal protein," said Dr Post. "With cultured meat, scientists can make meat production more efficient because they can keep all the variables under control. They also do not need to slaughter any cows." Dr Post thinks that commercial production is a decade or two away. (Source: *theguardian.com*, Monday 5 August 2013)

Jane says it's not a burger she would contemplate—how about you?

The final word is just to have common sense. "In burgers—as in all your food—opt for quality over quantity, and chose fresh, vibrant and delicious over processed, fake and toxic." Jane says. "Choose to enjoy, appreciate and care for what you eat over mindless, distracted disengagement." ●

healthy CHOICES

MIX IT UP

Try a blend of meats to reduce the overall fat content without losing flavour.

VEG OUT

How about a patty of tofu, pumpkin, oven cooked falafels, or even a whole field mushroom?

OPEN UP

Try an open burger (half a bun) or a bun-free burger.

GET TASTY

Flavour your patty with fresh and dried herbs and spices rather than sugar and salt-laden bottled sauces.

BE GROOVY

Try putting a dent in the top of your burger so it can hang on to a bigger pile of veg—as well as lettuce, try adding baby spinach, sprouts or grated carrot too.

unhealthy HORRORS

BELLY BUSTERS

A sensible patty is 100–150g—over 200g is overkill. And if it's too big to bite into, it's too big, full stop.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Double patties, double cheese, double bacon—it's all just more of everything than you need.

ARTIFICIALLY AWFUL

Nasty processed meats, cheese and sauces tend to be high in salt and additives. Short-term they give you bad breath and a bad gut, and long-term they can lead to heart disease and cancer.

OIL SLICKS

Poor quality mince often has high levels of saturated fat, and burgers with greasy onions and bacon, too much cheese and lashings of sauce, are heart attacks on a plate. If the fat runs down your arm, it's not a good sign.



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melissa: sovereign for the brain



In 1699, English herbalist John Evelyn described Melissa—or lemon balm—as “sovereign for the brain, strengthening the memory, and powerfully chasing away melancholy.” **Robyn Simon**, of Pure Oils International in Katoomba, says this three hundred year old quote is still the most accurate description she has ever read of *Melissa Officinalis*—but what is it, and what has it got to do with our busy modern lifestyles?

Melissa oil—the essential oil distilled from the *Melissa Officinalis* plant—is one of the most expensive oils, but one that offers a powerful and natural way to manage a problem all of us suffer at one time or another—stress. Running a small business or being a sole trader can be as stressful as it is rewarding, and stress can reduce our ability to concentrate, stymie our creativity and make us sick—and that’s not good when business relies on your performance.

In fact, 2008 research by Medicare Private found that stress costs Australian businesses over \$10 billion a year. The research also noted that individuals are best placed to notice the ‘early warning’ signs of stress—which can include difficulty sleeping, lack of concentration, low motivation, irritability and an upset stomach.

It is very easy to miss these signs, particularly as we can lose touch with ourselves quite often while we are wearing our working ‘hats’. “Our offices are busy places, separating us from the ebb and flow of daily life,” says Robyn. “The workplace has the intention of allowing us to direct our energies towards getting the job done. Combine this with the pressure for instantaneous

results—increased by new technology—and it becomes easy to neglect our physical and mental well-being.”

Melissa can help. “It is the essential oil that best acts to soothe the brain, and the body, when stressed by the chaotic demands of long hours in a busy workplace,” says Robyn, and it works in a number of ways.

Melissa has a calming, slightly sedative effect that reduces anxiety and allows us to pace ourselves better and cope with deadlines or the demands for multitasking. It increases concentration and focus—and has been shown to improve memory. It lifts the mood and can help with feelings of depression, frustration or anger.

Melissa soothes symptoms that are associated with nerves and stress, working as an anti-spasmodic to reduce stomach upsets, helping us relax and reconnect with our physical selves.

Melissa gets its botanical name from the Greek word mellisón (μελισσών) meaning ‘honey bee’. In its native Mediterranean and Southern European countries, it was traditionally planted near beehives to flavour the honey.

It has a long history of medicinal use, and its restorative properties are recorded in Greek and Roman Herbals as early as 2000BC. Later, it became an essential plant in the monastic gardens of the early Christian monks as they spread throughout Europe, and it became part of the ‘materia medica’—the books of Medieval Europe that detailed knowledge of all substances used for healing.

“Melissa is still a favourite of modern herbalists because of its effectiveness,” Robyn says, “and it is currently being investigated by more mainstream medical research as a treatment for agitation and memory deterioration in patients with Alzheimer’s and dementia.”

The good news is that the Melissa plant is a member of the mint family, and will easily grow in most temperate Australian gardens. But before you decide to try your hand at distilling your own Melissa oil, it is worth knowing that, unlike mint, Melissa yields relatively little oil for its weight—it takes between 3.5 and 7.5 tons to produce just 500g of oil.

Melissa fresh or dried leaves, however, can be made into a refreshing tea, and can be added to your bathwater to make a truly relaxing soak. The crushed leaves also make a great insect repellent when rubbed directly on the skin.

Here are five ways that Melissa can help you stay cool, calm and collected.

1. Office Angel

Use Melissa in a diffuser to lower stress and improve concentration while you are at your desk. It will uplift and focus your mind, actively reduce worry and frustration, and improve your memory.

2. Anti-anxiety

Melissa can be made into a tea using the green herb (fresh or dried), or the oil can be sprinkled onto herbal tea leaves. It makes a delicious, lemony drink that settles the stomach, soothes the nerves and aids restful sleep.

3. Rapid Rescue

Inhaling the scent of the oil directly from the bottle is a wonderful pick-me-up, and massaging some oil onto the back of the neck and temples—diluted in a carrier such as almond oil or a neutral moisturiser—can quickly restore calm.

4. Cold Sore Killer

If you tend to get cold sores when you become stressed, Melissa is one of the rare natural remedies with powerful anti-viral properties. Dabbing the undiluted oil directly onto the lesion can banish it within a few days—but be careful not to get it on the skin around the sore as it can cause irritation.

5. Restful Sleep

As well as adding Melissa to other sleep-enhancing herbs—such as Chamomile or Valerian to take as a tea before bed—a few drops of Melissa on your pillow can promote a more restful sleep.

The treasure that is Melissa

Melissa oil itself is potent, which means it can be used sparingly. This is great news for regular users, given that a 5ml bottle of 100% pure Melissa oil costs over \$100—and it's well worth it!

Robyn comments, "I have clients that have seen incredible relief from anxiety and depression, restlessness and stress, simply by inhaling Melissa oil for a few seconds at night after a trying day at work or in their business." She adds, "if you are buying Melissa oil, it is important to choose a reputable source. Beware cheaper versions of the product—they are likely to be a blend of lemongrass and citronella, or adulterated with a carrier oil."

So this Spring, why not plant some lemon balm—like mint, it will be equally happy in a pot or in the ground—or enjoy a lemon balm tea. And, no matter how busy or difficult life gets, Melissa essential oil 'sovereign for the brain' will help you remain calm, clear and relaxed, and relieve those late night feelings of anxiety and worry. ●

essentials of ESSENTIAL OILS

When buying essential oils, it's important to buy well and follow a few simple rules to keep them in the best condition.

CHECK THE LABEL

Always check the label to make sure that it is pure oil, and not a blend or one diluted with a carrier oil.

LOOK FOR THE DARK BOTTLE

Good quality essential oils are sold in cobalt blue, amber or sometimes dark green bottles. Sunlight causes essential oils to degrade, and coloured bottles protect them.

TIP AND DRIP

Buy bottles with 'tip and drip' stoppers rather than the old dropper variety. Droppers can introduce contamination into the oil and 'tip and drip' stoppers have the added advantage of controlling how much oil you use.

KEEP IT COOL AND CLOSED

Keep your oils in a cool, dark place and always close your bottle once you've released the amount of oil you require. This retains the aromatic efficacy of your oil and avoids contamination.

ESSENTIAL OILS USAGE GUIDE

Aromatic	Incredibly beneficial for calming and balancing mood, essential oils can be diffused into the air using a diffuser or breathed directly.
Topical	To ease tension, and for relaxation, essential oils can be massaged directly onto the body either neat or diluted with a carrier oil such as coconut or macadamia oil.
Internal	Essential oils with supplement labels are Generally Regarded As Safe (GRAS) and it is believed they can be ingested safely. <i>Always consult a qualified medical aromatherapist or medical practitioner prior to any internal use of essential oils.*</i>

Products mentioned in this article are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. *Always consult a medical or healthcare professional prior to using essential oils if you have any specific health concerns or if you are pregnant.



The Essential SHOP

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Since 2014, we have been trialling and tantalising our olfactory, somatic and gustatory senses (smell, touch and taste), waiting for the perfect time to share our *Essential* findings with you!



Melissa Officialis is the first of our featured essential oils which you have just read about and are invited to purchase today.

This *Essential* treasure called *Melissa* is made from the plant of the same name. *Melissa* was one of the first oils we trialled. Though one of the expensive premium oils, *Melissa* is an oil we return to again and again, every day and, especially, every night.

Melissa helps calm feelings of being overwhelmed with work and life, balances and grounds you when you feel pulled in all directions, and helps you to breathe and reassess your feelings when negative emotions or anger arise.

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The Essential Shop is passionate about helping people all over the world experience and enjoy the amazing benefits of using essential oils for living. We sell 100% pure and natural certified organic (ACO/USDA) essential oils and essential oil products worldwide. We are based in the Blue Mountains of Australia and invite customers to contact us to learn more about using essential oils for their health and well-being. Email sales@theessentialshop.com.au or visit theessentialshop.com.au.





the big screen: kiss me kate

For a very long time Ann Miller was one of my least favourite female actors. Her voice was overbearing, the characters she played were often mean or bossy, and her dance routines long and, in parts, boring. This was mainly due to the tap sequences which she mechanically repeated while turning again and again, and her hair often falling out from its clip. She was one of these actors that sent chills down my spine... until now.

Directed by George Sidney, with songs by Cole Porter, the 1953 MGM film *Kiss Me Kate* is a modern, and musical, retelling and re-staging of Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew*. Ann Miller plays Lois Lane, a romantic, innocent, flirtatious and likeable showgirl who 'gets a break' in the theatre as the fair Bianca, sister to the shrew Kate (Lilli Vanessi in the movie, played by Kathryn Grayson). Alongside Miller and Grayson is Howard Keel playing Fred Graham, a producer and actor, and Petruchio in the play, a visitor to the city of Padua where Kate and Bianca live, who will tame and wed the shrew Kate.

Off stage we learn that Fred and Lilli were once married, and now divorced, and we increasingly become aware that this was most likely due to Lilli being a squeaking high-pitched, and somewhat violent, brat—with blonde lacquered hair.

Boyfriend to Lois is Bill Calhoun (played by Tommy Rall), who leads a life of gambling and debt, as well as plays Lucentio, one of three suitors—and eventual husband—to Bianca. Together Bianca and her three suitors perform some of the best musical and dance sequences in the film, and today Cole

Porter fans would know the musical numbers well—*Tom, Dick or Harry* and *From This Moment On*.

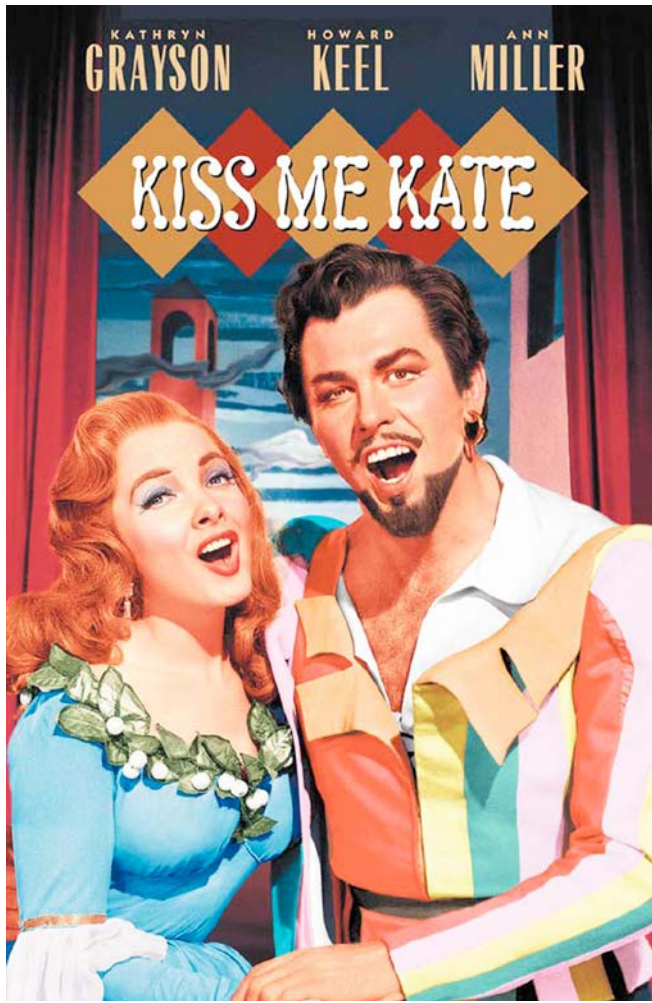
Fred and Lilli also perform a few duets including *So In Love* and *Wunderbar*, however the solo performances of Howard Keel with *I've Come to Wive it Wealthily in Padua* and *Were Thine That Special Face* are my favourites in the film, second to the Bianca and suitors musical numbers.

The musical score in the film is unique. It fuses the movie-pop style often seen in 1950s musical films, with a contemporary, street-dance style similar to the 1961 Natalie Wood film *West Side Story*, described as 'lyric theatre'. Choreographed, and in part performed, by actor, dancer and multi-award winning musical theatre choreographer, legend Bob Fosse, the *From This Moment On* dance sequence was dubbed ahead of its time—and rightly so.

While Keel and Grayson—and supporting actors Keenan Wynn and James Whitmore, as Gangster hit-men Lippy and Slug—perform the more 1950s-style numbers, Keel's *Were Thine That Special Face* gave us gutsier lyrics and a deeper melody.

Kiss Me Kate is refreshing, entertaining and dazzling for the classic film fan's palate. It has a brilliant musical score, and the dance sequences and choreography are well worth the watch.

Ann Miller has a lively and disarming air—and is easy to watch, Kathryn Grayson is refreshingly 'shrew', and Howard Keel, as always, has a natural charisma on screen upstaging any actor of today's era of 'films'. ●



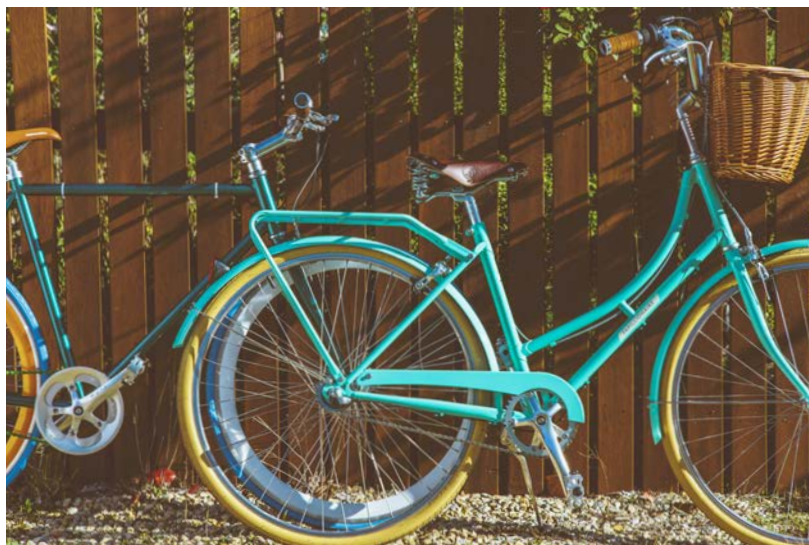


photo focus: miners on bicycles

I had driven along Great Western Highway past Blackheath and Mount Victoria when the scenery suddenly changed. Instead of endless, monotonous woods, there was a vast valley with open fields, farm houses, horses on paddocks and quaint little shops along the highway.

I breathed a sigh of relief. The long and winding descent down the hill eased into a leisurely drive on a country road. The bright Australian sun was up and doing its best to put a smile on these pastoral surroundings. We both had a job to do and we were feeling fine.

I was on my way to the "little house on the prairie", as its owner called it. She had hired me to photograph her partner's bicycle collection as a birthday surprise for him. The idea was to select one or two of the photos and make a canvas print to present to the hero of the day.

It was a great idea and I wanted to help make it succeed. As I arrived at the little house, my client had already lined up the first bicycle against the romantic wooden fence surrounding the yard. I introduced myself. We chatted about bikes, and about riding as a hobby. I wondered why bicycling in Australia was seen as a sport first, and a means of transport second. Or was that the case just in the Mountains?

Where I come from people are cycling to work and shops as a matter of routine. The bikes have mud guards and rear racks. They are seen more as utility vehicles than exercise machines.

I know there was a time when bicycles were a utility vehicle in Australia, too.

In the latter years of the 19th century, and the first years of the 20th century, there were brave (but poor) men who packed their knapsacks and shovels on a bicycle and set out to cross the desert separating the city of Perth and the mining fields of Kalgoorlie.

Many of them never reached their destination, let alone struck gold.

But it is to these poor cyclists that Australia owes its current wealth. To them and others—who mined minerals, raised cattle, grew wheat and started factories. Life was no doubt hard and there was little time to complain. You either made your way to your patch of land and your particular dream—or you died trying.

Some of that do-or-die spirit still survives in Australia. It thrives when people are encouraged to make their own fortunes and it is made possible by a population that values hard work.

We finished the photo shoot at an old abandoned service station in the historical village of Little Hartley. I took my client back to her little house on the prairie.

As I drove out, I thought how well the shoot had gone and I felt happy that my job allowed me to meet such lovely people as this client. Some of her bikes even had rear racks. ●

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