



**dragonfly**  
MARKETING

## BUSINESS MINDS

**Business Minds** with Jane Hillsdon of Dragonfly Marketing



**M**ark, you have recently launched an accounting and advisory practice called Evolution Road with business partner Reece Dein. Can you tell us a little about this business and the services that it offers?

Evolution Road is Port Macquarie's newest boutique advisory practice, providing a one-stop financial services solution to individuals and businesses of the Hastings and surrounding areas.

Reece and I strongly believe that accounting and financial planning offer strong synergies that when intertwined, optimise the client experience. This allows us to provide a financially holistic overview for an individual or business. For instance, whilst it is important to complete your annual tax return, it is just as crucial to ensure you have a valid will, super funds have been consolidated, your income and family are sufficiently insured and your home loan rate remains competitive. It's the annual health check to ensure our clients' financial objectives remain on track.

We boast a fantastic team, who have worked together previously for several years and provide the specialised skillset required to make Evolution Road a market leader in the local area.

**Can you tell us a little about what financial planning is and what benefits it can offer?**

Financial planning is about focusing on and developing strategies to help manage a client's financial and taxation affairs. Many people believe financial advice is just for the wealthy. This is not the case. It can assist

people at all levels of financial health, by providing strategies for improving and growing wealth. It can be as simple as constructing a savings plan for your children's education, through to gearing property in a self-managed superannuation fund.

Employing the services of a qualified financial planner is becoming more popular. Like employing a doctor to manage your health, many are coming to the realisation that it is also important to employ professionals to assist with responsible money management. In the past, it has generally been the norm to seek this advice from family members and friends, which is at times akin to asking your butcher for advice on vegetables.

### Tell us about your background and how you came to be in Port Macquarie?

I was lucky enough to grow up in this beautiful town. University and roles within the financial services industry soon took me to the city, where I essentially plied my trade for a number of years and continued my education. I worked closely with mentors such as Max Walsh and Daryl Dixon, who are considered some of Australia's leading superannuation commentators, and was also lucky enough to have exposure to investment in both Australia and America. Sanity eventually prevailed, when my wife Mariane and I decided the best place to raise our children was back on the Mid North Coast. It wasn't a difficult decision.

### What, if any, are the major differences between being a financial adviser in a metro area such as Sydney to advising in a regional community?

There is obviously a higher level of asset wealth in the city, due in part to property prices and the wage differential between metropolitan

and regional areas. Tax and investment strategies certainly vary because of this. What I have learnt during my twenty years in this industry is that every client has their own story and their own expectations for a financially secure future. My underlying philosophy has always been the same. Treat people equally and with the same level of respect. Each journey is going to take a slightly different path.

Most notably, I have found regional areas such as Port Macquarie and Wauchope boast tighter communities through channels such as sport, recreation, charity and the arts. Locals are keen to support business, whether it's a restaurant, boutique clothing store or a professional service like ours. Word of mouth works incredibly well, but of course you must be consistently conscious of the quality of service you're providing to ensure future success.

Building solid relationships with your clients is an imperative pursuit for any business.

### What processes do you have in place to ensure that this activity is prioritised and implemented across your business activities?

They say it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. It's why Evolution Road do things differently. Strong client relationships and open communication are essential components of a successful advisory practice. We are managing people's nest eggs and financial livelihoods. In an ever-changing landscape, a strict review process is compulsory. Keeping it simple is paramount.

### What is the most rewarding part about running your business?

For both Reece and myself, it is the acknowledgment that our clients have the

faith and confidence in our team to take them forward financially. This trust is not lost on us. Having the ability to watch your clients grow and evolve personally is also a perk of the job. Photos of babies turns into photos of children at school and then as young adults. To many you aren't just an adviser, but also a confidante and friend.

### Now that we have just begun the new financial year, what are some of the key financial considerations that business owners and individuals should be focusing on to help plan for a healthy FY17/18?

The plethora of recent government changes has kept us incredibly busy over the last few months. Significant superannuation reform was introduced at the start of July, which headlines the major changes to be aware of in 17/18. This has impacted contribution limits and taxation savings. Changes to negative gearing will impact some investment property owners. There are also many opportunities that have presented themselves, including the government's extension of the \$20,000 small business write-off and measures for first home buyers to tax effectively save for their first house.

### And finally, if you could invite three business people to lunch, who would they be and why would you invite them?

There is so much to learn from a man like Warren Buffett. His discipline and capacity to read investment markets is unrivalled. I would have to invite Bill Gates, to learn more about his philanthropic endeavours and Tony Robbins, for his ability to motivate and inspire a crowd. I just hope there's no feuding over who pays the bill.

**Thanks for your time, Mark.**



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