



FIVE QUESTIONS

When Gemma Manning decided to leave the corporate world behind, she never dreamed her marketing company Manning & Co would become the roaring success it is now.

Did you imagine you would be as successful as you are now when you started the business four years ago?

No, not really. I started Manning & Co in 2008 when an opportunity popped up to consult to a mid-tier telecommunications company. It was an opportunity too good to miss, so I left the corporate marketing world and stepped into my own business. At the time, I didn't have any long-term expectations of the business. The opportunity came up out of the blue and I knew that this was the time to branch out on my own and start consulting.

This was my springboard client and was quickly followed by an additional three clients coming on board in the first year. This was all through word of

experienced year-on-year growth ever since, with revenue tripling in the last 18 months.

The growth has come more quickly than I expected. Having two small children (and being pregnant and having my youngest daughter during my second year of business), I wasn't planning to rapidly grow the business until my girls were of school-age. I originally only wanted enough work to bring in an income and keep my experience up-to-date.

How important is your website to the business?

Our website is very important to our business and our future growth. While most of our business to date has been through word-of-mouth and referrals

projects that we have won by purely being found on Google and having a website that ticked all of our clients' boxes.

What is the biggest challenge you had to overcome when starting up the business?

Starting out, my biggest challenge was acclimatising to not having a regular income. Income was sporadic and I didn't really have any true understanding of cashflow other than what I had come across in business and financial management text books.

How do you balance the time between being a business owner and raising a young family?

I have to be honest, it isn't easy. I have a great amount of respect for women in business with a young family. You hear about the number of hours you need to work in those first years in business during the start-up phase. This is hard enough on its own, and trying doing it with young children is exhausting.

Having your own business is great in that it grants you flexibility. I can take my girls to their swimming lessons, be there to drop them off and pick them up from pre-school, etc. However, at the same time, there is a huge amount of responsibility that you cannot switch off from. It also involves late nights checking emails, doing proposals, responding to requests once the girls go to bed, which is hard. It really is a 24/7 job running a business with young children and I take my hat off to all the women out there doing it.

What is the main thing that differentiates your business from the competition?

We provide very senior expertise (our team have on averages more than 10 years of experience), without charging over-the-top fees that agencies typically do. Our other key point-of-difference is that we come up with the ideas and bring them to life. We do the strategic thinking for our clients and advise them on what particular initiatives will work for their business. We then implement these initiatives and our clients are