

## Power Up Your Business Podcast Transcript

### Episode 7 – Transformation into a Million Dollar Business

**Matt** [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of Power Business podcast. I'm your host, Matthew Jones and in this episode, we speak with husband and wife team Malcolm and Kylie Vendergraff owners and operators of Brizscapes landscaping based in Brisbane. This is a really good story, great success story, great turnaround story where Malcolm and Kylie started their business in 2007 at the same time they were starting to build their family. Here, over a 10-year period, working really hard, both Malcolm and Kylie, high stress, limited time, really struggling for cash in the bank, really getting to that stage with living week to week. They come to that stage in that 10-year period where something had to change. They couldn't keep going the way they were going and really hear how Malcolm and Kylie really got out of their comfort zone, really had to change the way that they were operating. They were open to being coached. They're open to change the way that they were doing things. Malcolm getting really uncomfortable so removing him off the tools, getting him more focused in the office and Malcolm and Kylie had done a great job of really defining their office roles and where they're accountable for and what needs to happen to ensure that the business moves forward profitably. It wasn't just about doing more work. It was about making sure they moved forward in a profitable fashion and to do that, they really had to get their team on board. Malcolm, again, getting really uncomfortable, having to step back and allowing others to come in and draw the business, so for Malcolm, nurturing the business for 10 years, basically been his baby for 10 years that's a big step. Allowing others to step in and draw the business for him. Then as a result, this is the cool thing, transforming the business from turning over around 400,000 dollars a year, 500,000 dollars a year, being really busy with limited return. Now it's a seven-figure business. Now it's a business that generates an operating profit margin of close to 20% with the processes that have been put in place, both Malcolm and Kylie now working less and really have great control of the business, making great decisions. Essentially they're moving away from being enslaved to a job where they have slaved for basically 10 years to now, really building a business that they can really see that serves themselves and their family into the future. So it's really exciting. So no longer a firefighter, very much now a conductor, so this is a great podcast everyone. Hope you enjoy this one. Let's get into it. Cheers.

[00:02:35] Because there's too much on the line, you're sacrificing shitload now, and your family needs to benefit. You got to make learning a passion for yourself. They think if they come to realise it. Hey.

**Matt** [00:02:56] Malcolm and Kylie, welcome.

**Malcolm** [00:02:59] Thanks, Jonesy. Thanks for having us.

**Kylie** [00:03:00] Thank you.

**Matt** [00:03:02] Stoked. Malcolm and Kylie, really great, too, obviously, from our point and a personal point of view, we've been clients now for close to 24 months, so it's great to have you on board and see you on this journey. Can you give us a bit of an insight into the early days of operating your business and then starting from working for someone else and then starting your own business? So can you set the scene, how you started, what year you started and how those early years looked like?

**Malcolm** [00:03:30] Yes, so we kind of started 13 years ago, basically just mowing lawns, little bit of landscaping here and there initially. I guess our main goal was to be able to have Kylie at home looking out for the kids and I'm on the tools, working and herself doing some office work, financial stuff in the office as a bit of a team game with both of us.

**Matt** [00:03:53] Then those early years, you started to get driving and then Kylie helping out, how did those early years look like for yourself in the background again, getting the family started working.

**Kylie** [00:04:08] They were very busy days, particularly juggling young children and a business, very long days.

**Matt** [00:04:16] So was it definitely work into the evening, you know, trying to catch up over the weekend. How's that lifestyle looking like?

**Malcolm** [00:04:23] Yes, we are basically up early and out late. So I myself personally, we are up early, get on the tools, do the job throughout the day, come home, have dinner with the kids, [00:04:34]bath [0.0s] the kids with Kylie and then back in the office when I had to get quotes done and speaking on Kylie's behalf, she was probably the same trying to deal with the kids throughout the day, in the morning and then in the office at night time to try and get invoicing and everything out as well.

**Malcolm** [00:04:53] Now is that the classic scenario where you really build a job for yourself and you feel like you're on that hamster wheel. I know that especially in those days that we've discussed often, you know, for all that work that you've put in, there was that hand to mouth or living week-to-week feeling with a lack of sort of certainty about the future. Is that correct?

**Kylie** [00:05:10] Absolutely, yes, it was day-by-day struggling most weeks to get by but we kind of felt like we were stuck in it. So, we just kept trying and trying and trying to make it work, make ends meet and provide for our young [00:05:31]family so very much just working ridiculous hours. It was full on. [9.5s]

**Matt** [00:05:43] It's a common story. It's a common scenario where it's that juggle where you're trying to grow your family, develop your family, develop your kids, have a lifestyle as well, maintain your personal relationship as well as in growing the business and it's very difficult. Look that was like a 10-year period, correct? You got to that stage of a 10-year period around that sort of early 2009, in late 2009, where the both of you getting together, you realised you needed to make a change or you needed to sort of say okay, what do we need to do to get out of this rut and go to that next level, is that correct?

**Malcolm** [00:06:17] Yes, so we're really slogging it out, 11 or 12 years there. We were thinking we were doing everything right but there'll be times there, Jonesy, when Kylie goes, what can I invoice? We need money. I'm like, well, I'm busting my backside here trying to get the jobs done and doing the work and working long hours and why don't we get money in the bank. So it was that real stress of doing the work and having no reward at the end of it. It got to one stage there about 18 months ago last year and now there's nothing. We had no work. We had no money in the bank. There's the risk of losing a house. It just got to a point where we both sat down with each other and said, look, we've got to take this, you know, one direction. You know, it's either we give it up and look in the paper and find ourselves a new job or we turn this business into something decent that's

what we did. We made the decision that we're going to keep going. We're going to turn this thing around and charge forward.

**Matt** [00:07:16] And that was obviously a tough decision when you're basically it's that reality check where you look in the mirror and you say, listen, what needs to improve or what decisions do I need to make. What did it look like? So in that 18 months ago, two years ago, I think you're turning around that at that stage, around 400,000 dollars a year. Is that correct?

**Kylie** [00:07:35] Correct.

**Matt** [00:07:37] So you're turning around 400,000 dollars a year. You're still very busy doing a lot of work at that stage. You're not making any profitability and then struggling to really draw that wage and then obviously it's that stage where, you know, and every business owner generally gets to it, and it's a credit to your persistence and determination, you know, still to be really driving it hard for that 10 years, 11 years, because most people drop out before year five. It got to that stage, obviously, where you knew you needed to, I suppose you needed outside help and I suppose that's a credit to both you. You realise it. You both needed to change. You both needed to look at how you looked at your work or took the job on in terms of how to build a business as opposed to a job. Now, a lot of business owners, especially since podcast, a lot of business owners don't actually understand the difference between building a job and actually creating a business. A lot of people as a tradie, they get a business card, they get out there, they go to market and they start selling and they get busy. It's a bit like what you were talking about, Malcolm. You're like, I'm busy doing the job but I don't have to worry about invoice enough to worry about cash flow. I don't worry about trying to follow up to get paid. What do you mean when Kylie is saying to you, look, hang on, I'm sitting here, I got nothing in the bank and you are on the job site. You'll find out, you're there scratching your head thinking, what more can I do? Correct?

**Malcolm** [00:09:01] Yes that's it. I'm always busy. You speak to people. How is work going? I'm flat out. I'm busy. I'm working hard. I'm getting home late. I'm doing the right things here because I'm busy. I had an apprentice, had a tradesman and we had an office girl as well. Then when the tough time came 18, 19 months ago, we didn't have that money in the bank to help us through it. We had literally nothing. So that was the turning point for us to say, look what are we going to do? What are we going to do? At the end of day, it was kind of made easy because we had to make that decision. We had to make it unfortunately, it was forced upon us but we had to do it.

**Matt** [00:09:42] Basically your back is to the wall and you're in the corner and you need to make a proactive choice. From there so looking at it, so, again, small team, high stress, you know, working long hours, putting a lot of pressure on the family life and in that uncertainty of where to go and what to do. So turning over around that, you know, 400,000 dollars, no profit being really busy to now. This is the transition to now and then just fast-forwarding it. Now, we're in a situation where you are now, you know, we definitely well positioned this year. You will be pushing through the million dollars so you're going to be a seven-figure business. So tick that box, which is great turnover but as we know and everyone in our community and our methodology, turnover is one thing but it's all about the bottom line and the great thing that you've done. It's a credit to you, which we're going to really tap into here this year. I want all the listeners to really understand some of the key things that you put in place to achieve this. So going from a 400,000 dollar business to a seven figure business, then more importantly, operating profit, going from making basically

no profit, no drawing a substantial wage to now generating a profitability of around that 16, 17% operating profit after drawing a wage. Correct?

**Malcolm** [00:11:01] Correct.

**Matt** [00:11:03] So it's a massive difference, right? It's a massive difference. All of a sudden, the financial pressures are gone but then the kicker, right and this is the big kicker. You've gone from really working hard and not drawing anything. You're thinking at that stage where you're probably at rest. Would you agree that you think you still got to do it, even though you can't physically probably do any more but you're still thinking, shit, I'm not getting hit financially, so I've got to do more to now down the track, how's the work life balance now, though? How many hours again in your schedule for both of you? How has that transitioned to now? How many hours a week working now from a control point of view?

**Kylie** [00:11:43] Well, I'm able to work school hours, which is great with our three kids. So I work from 9:00 till 3:00 so I can still drop them off at school and pick them up and yes Malcolm is probably working know a normal 7:00 till 4:00, type of day so it's incredible the lifestyle change that we've had now.

**Matt** [00:12:07] The turnaround has been unbelievable, right, Malcolm, again, one of the things we talked about with yourself, Malcolm, is you've now gone from smashing yourself on the tools on sight, you're now working intelligently, as we frame, working intelligently on the business.

**Malcolm** [00:12:22] Yes so literally, I am technically off the tools. So boys make a joke of it now that careful, Malcolm, don't get any calluses on your hands. You're working too hard. Yes, I'm off the tools now working on the business, as you said, Jonesy, which, you know, it's, funny to say, it's been the best move that we ever did was getting off the tools. It really changed the business. It got the business moving. It got growing and got it moving upwards, allowed me to focus on, as you would say, the numbers with Kylie and hitting the targets that we needed to do and now instead of me, just doing it all, I now try and delegate the workload to my team.

**Matt** [00:13:04] It's a credit to Malcolm, too. This is where a lot of tradie business owners, they really struggle with that thinking. What do you mean, I've got to be off the site. What do you mean, I've got to spend more time on the business because it's so easy as a tradie and myself being back in the day in the 1990s, I'm flogging my plumbing business. I just thought I had to be on site. I thought my value was on site but at that stage, I didn't realise that I was actually a businessperson. I was doing that tradie mindset where I thought it was all about the job but because you're now and again, another key thing is that you're starting to build a brand or you're starting to build Brizscapes. Brizscapes is the brand. Brizscapes is the asset. It's got the systems. It's got the credibility. It's got the team that's not Malcolm. You've done a good job of getting out there in the marketplace saying that, hey, we deliver this via Brizscapes, where a lot of tradie business owners struggle because it's all about them, the individual. So the client always wants them. The client really never has faith in the processes or their other team and is where I think you've done a really good job of building up your team, getting your team to the confidence levels where they can actually follow your lead and that's a credit to you and that's the difference between building a brand that can deliver for you or, you know, having a job that's all about you as individual. You've done a great job of transitioning from that, which is difficult and also, would you agree too, you've got to have confidence in your team? Agree?

**Malcolm** [00:14:30] I agree. Yes, totally, you know, it's hard to let go because it is our little baby that we've had for 13 years. We developed that, you know, all that time. Don't get me wrong, I still go to the site. I still see the boys over an afternoon in the office or I might see them in the morning. So, like, for example, this morning I went to site being Monday morning and just stood back and watched them work and gave them a few little tips, gave them a few pointers. Just be there so I'm still a point of contact for them. I was only there for an hour, hour and a half but it just shows that I still care. I'm still with them. I'm still on the job and we're all one team. We're all one team.

**Matt** [00:15:12] We're speaking with Malcolm and Kylie Vandengraff from Brizscapes Landscaping. If you would like to learn how you can earn more and work less with a lot less stress, just like Malcolm and Kylie, please pick up a free copy of my book, Power Up Your Tradie Business. Only pay for shipping, go to [www.powerupyourbusiness.com.au/book](http://www.powerupyourbusiness.com.au/book) and entering the code podcast.

**Matt** [00:15:44] And that's another key thing is that the team know that you're there to support them and that's the thing when you're off the tools as a business owner, when you're off the tools, you got more time to plan, prepare, more time to have conversations with your team, more time to get to know them, to help them grow but also give them a trusted confidence that they're doing the right thing. Again, it's hard when you're on the job and your main focus is, come on, let's get in. Let's get the excavator and let's get the supplies and let's do it all. It's very hard as a business owner when you're doing all that to actually sit back and give attention to your team, to make sure your team growing and the planning and again, getting out of that reactive mindset where you're that classic hamster on a wheel where everyone I'd love a dollar for every time that people say me to, Jonesy, you know, that'd be great. You know, in a perfect world, that'd be great to have to start, plan, prepare. I say, you can do it but your choice is to be dictated by the end of the phone and be reactive. This is where we want to tap in to now and this is where some of the things that you've done really well. This is for the listeners now, the tradie business owner and business owners in general, they really want to start, actually, getting to a stage where we're working intelligently, where we're working less but we're generating more profit because, again, it's about working smart, not working harder in some of the processes. Now one of the great things that both you have done and credit to you and a lot of it from Kylie's point of view, you've done really well in clarifying your roles. You've really done, you know, segmented your roles between Kylie, especially now both you and the office primarily but, Kylie, you're very clear on your job description and accountability and likewise, Malcolm, your job description. Kylie, can you just say some of the processes, again, getting into that stage where we're getting good cash in the bank, making sure that we're getting paid, and we're getting invoiced. What are some of what we call habits, you know, those success habits that we talk about? What are some of the key things over the past 18 months that you're implementing on that weekly basis or regular basis really transformed your decision-making as a business owner?

**Kylie** [00:17:56] So we do a lot more reporting within the finances, the marketing department, in order to track any trends that might be happening within our business. We also have weekly meetings as well. So there's constant communication between everyone, so everybody's on the same page. We all know what our focus is for the week. Also, we do our 13-week cash flow prediction every Monday. So we can see for the next 13 weeks where we're sitting. We also know what our weekly targets are, our monthly targets. Everything is very clear to us now so it's made a huge difference even just tracking where our leads are coming from and knowing, you know, what our best marketing strategies are

moving forward. So it's all those little things that are helping us. Then I suppose the profit plan to set those goals for the next 12 months and just being accountable for those goals and being able to report back to them, whether it's, you know, weekly or monthly and go, hey, are we going to hit our targets? Are we on track to smash our goals? So I find Malcolm and I both very disciplined and competitive people. We love having the goals set high. It makes us want to achieve those goals. It really helps within our business to keep us on track and hold us accountable.

**Malcolm** [00:19:50] Yes that's great, I think one of the things that you do really well, which is those processes and this is what I say to like a lot of business owners will say because they're still struggling and they'll go, yes but I've got these processes or I've got a job management system or I've got a cash flow but you can have a process or a system but if you don't leverage it and you haven't got the discipline, like you say, to actually really fully buy in and lean into it on that weekly basis, make sure it's up to date, make sure that you understand how things are ticking, then you're never going to leverage the power of any process. The great thing that you do, that you both do, is that you both leverage the power of all the processes that you use. As you say, it gives your whole team a clear focus of what needs to be achieved. Well, you mentioned you were talking about where our part of our methodology with our Cube software platform, you know, it's a set profit plan. Make sure we've got that clear side of the next year but I think what you do really well to is the how we're tracking report, which is that really line-by-line where every expense, there's got to be accountability around that and you do a good job with that Kylie. Correct?

**Kylie** [00:21:00] Absolutely, yes and like you say, it's the one percenters so, you know, it might just be a little bit here, a little bit there but by the end of that financial year, the little bit is a lot and yes, somebody needs to be accountable for that so it just makes you think about every little thing and how can we do it better, even if it's Malcolm and I, what can we do better? Everybody can do better so, yes, it's really good and helps you keep focused.

**Malcolm** [00:21:31] And at the end of the day, it just gives us the confidence, Jonesy. You know, like 18 months ago, we didn't have the confidence. We didn't know where we were, you know, where we were heading. We didn't know what was coming in but now that we have all these systems, these processes in place, yes, we know what's happened in the past. We know what's happening now. now we can project, we can forecast what can possibly happen in the future so we can make educated decisions on yes, do we need to hire another person do to cope with this workload that we're projecting coming up. Do we need an extra truck or do we need this? So we're ahead of the game. We are ready. So when these things happen, we're proactive, as you say, ready to go. We're not on the back foot. We're not chasing our [00:22:11]towels that's [0.1s] just one less stress that we have to worry about. We're just a lot more confident, which takes away the stress, which makes our life a lot easier and more relaxing.

**Matt** [00:22:20] And essentially, it's just that turning it around from that [00:22:23]hamster on the [0.0s] wheel being reactive and everything. It is actually putting the time in and being proactive, which, as you say, just gives you the confidence you're in control and reduces the stress.

**Kylie** [00:22:33] Absolutely.

**Matt** [00:22:34] Now, this is what I really want listeners to tap into here. So, again, the common thought is that, you know, I've got to be on the job to make profit. The common thought is that, you know, I've got to be there with the customer. The common thought is

that, you know, I'm going to be leading the charge. You know, the common thought is, you know, I don't want to give my team members too much information because, you know, they might take it and run with it so that's a common thought and that's the common thought is that leads most businesses to never getting ahead. Most business owners struggle to draw, trade-business based, struggle to draw a regular wage. They can't even draw a regular weekly wage. So that's a common scenario because they don't want to get off the job because it's all about them. This is what I say to people, you're now a business owner and you're going to make that big leap, which is what you've done. Now by focusing on the key important things as a business owner but looking at the processes, you're now in a much different position, both profitability wise, both from a stress level wise but more importantly, you're building an asset or a brand that's got value. Now, would you agree, Malcolm, this would never happen, you know, where you were 18 months ago where you just thought it was all about the job, right? Correct?

**Malcolm** [00:23:44] Yes, correct, 18 months ago, I thought I was doing it right because I was busy. I thought, yes, I'm a business. I know what I'm doing, I'm a tradie, I'm a landscaper. I can build this, do that and I thought, yes, we had it all. At the end of the day when there's no money in the bank, you got to realise there is something that I'm not doing well. Some of them are missing, just had to put my hand up and say, look, I need help. We both need help, which we did.

**Matt** [00:24:07] And look, that's a credit to you, obviously, couple of years ago, you attended one of our training sessions, correct? Somewhat of our blueprint training sessions.

**Malcolm** [00:24:15] I attended three.

**Matt** [00:24:18] There you go.

**Malcolm** [00:24:19] I've been to three. I was trying to do it myself. I was trying to do it myself to take the cheap option do it the easy way but I needed that extra help.

**Matt** [00:24:29] Look that's part of it, as you know, like from a coaching point of view or advising or mentoring point of view, it's especially now, it's that accountability and that drive and putting the pieces together that obviously sits right. Now the good thing that, you know, for both of you, you are open and we talk about how success leaves clues. What we talk about here is that we're not reinventing the wheel, what we're doing and as you do really well, we're putting a puzzle together that's a well-worn puzzle. We know the outcome. Unfortunately, some people still think I'm going to only go this way or I'm not going to do it. So what we're talking with business owners is amazing. Those little one percenters do these little things right. Some people think, it is still a myth or it's not for me or whatever but the great thing for both of you is it you connected the dots. Sometimes we've had people jump on board and, you know, part of our community, Malcolm and Kylie, which, you know, some of the team, they saw us 10 years ago, they thought, you know, 10 years ago now all will be sweet. I'll just get it done. Then they come on board 10 years later and they say, I wish I jumped on board 10 years ago but that's fine. Everyone's got a different take on a different journey for their business. Some people just don't want it and that's fine. This is where I am really grateful for both you guys coming on board and trusting us on your journey. We just love having people and clients on board like yourselves, who really buy into it because we're competitive as well. We just love people who want to win. I love Malcolm, just, you want to just touch on some of your weekly sales targets and, you know, if you miss your target by, say, five thousand, one month or one

week, that then adds onto next week that's how competitive you are. How does that drive your focus for business development?

**Malcolm** [00:26:12] Yes, I guess our main goal is to have a certain dollar value that I go try and get in sales each week and then if I miss that, then I got try and make it up the following week. It just kind of keeps us that 13 weeks in front, keeps us rolling, just keeps your eye on the ball, keeps you in the game. If you drop it then Kylie comes in and says, hey, Mel, you haven't won any [00:26:34] quotes [0.0s] this week, like she's done for the past couple. So I've got to put finger out. It's good, she keeps me accountable. She keeps the whole team accountable as well and yes, we just keep pushing forward with having our set goals.

**Matt** [00:26:50] You want to add to that Kylie?

**Kylie** [00:26:53] I think by simplifying it and making it a weekly target, it's easier because you know what you have to do by the end of the week. Whereas I feel like if it goes any further than a week, it's easy to lose track of time. So this is why we give a lot of our report on a weekly basis and we have our targets on a weekly basis because it just keeps the ball rolling. We know, okay, well, we've just completed a week's worth of work, so we need to have another week's worth of work booked in to keep the plan happening. Yes, I just find it, it's working really well to keep us going.

**Matt** [00:27:37] I think it's great that, you know, six habits that we talk about on that weekly basis. This is where for the listeners, this is how their methodology and they connect the dots is it is from a process point of view, one you get a target, so you are really clear from a profit plan. You work at your target, cool, I need as an example, I need 40,000 dollars a week or a month, there's my target cool. Lock it in. The next thing is then, okay, where is our sales pipeline connecting the target with making sure you've got enough development and enough leads in the system. Then we get that in there, so we know we have enough leads, we're winning the work, we're going to hit that work and in the next thing. It's one thing winning the work and then Kylie jumping in correctly, then it's like, okay, when are we going to get paid, making sure we're going to get paid and then from the cash flow forecaster and then we get to the how we are tracking report the profitability. Okay, great, we've hit our target. We've been paid that's great but also then, two, is it profitable work? So do we deliver that 40,000 on our agreed cost, the sale with our labour percentages and so ultimately, we just haven't wasted a month working hard without profit. Agree?

**Malcolm** [00:28:44] Yes.

**Kylie** [00:28:44] Totally.

**Matt** [00:28:46] So it's in that simple sense and point for listeners who we've just gone through, probably sounds complicated but as you know, with our process trying to connect the dots and making as simple as possible that's our passion and that's where we get all freaked out, right? We get really excited by the numbers. It's about, you know, hey, you need to know your scorecard. I just can't, I cannot accept when business owners go that's not my, you know, the account looks after that, the bookkeeper looks after that, the mother-in-law looks after that, that is a recipe for disaster. In like any sporting organisation in anywhere around the world, you need to know your scorecard number one. Make sure you're achieving your target but also what areas need to be improved. You've done that hands down and it's a massive achievement, you know, in terms of the growth, over 100% growth in sales, growth in profitability and it's all because, like you say, it's the one percent.



It's not about working harder, everyone, this is what we need to understand listeners, it's not about working harder. It's about working smarter. It's not about holding on tight. It's about letting go. It's not about doing more. It's about less is more. Do less work. Do less things but do them great. Add better value. Bring your A game. Do those little things so you maximise. Don't go out there and do more get another process, get another job management. Win more work. Do more marketing or hire more teams if you're not prepared to do the one percenters to ensure that you deliver profitability because you can do more and the cash goes south, profitability goes south, stress levels go north. This is what I love about, you know, your whole basis of that. You know, the fundamentals of success are those one percenters and staying focused on that and the key link there, the key link I want to sort of tap into now is that. It's great. You've got that so you're doing really well from an admin and office point of view. Both of you are working well with your team. You're working well, collaborating really well as a husband and wife team, which is awesome, which is really important, really defining your roles and responsibilities and accountabilities, just tell me, just share your story now with connecting to your team. We touched a little bit about it before but how do you drive your team on? When you're working in the office and you have just about all, Malcolm, you don't get blisters and calluses or whatever. What are some of the key processes you've put in around your team to ensure that they have got the confidence and you've got the confidence in them to deliver on your expectations?

**Malcolm** [00:31:13] So as I said earlier, I try and meet with them so whether it's individually, whether it's a team thing at the shed on Monday morning or Friday afternoon or whether it's with them on site just going through the boys might be doing a link block wall. I'm just there with them standing in the background, just talking to them but watching them how they're doing it and just correcting on how we do it our way. Our artists being there to guide them and show them not all the time but most of the time even if we have a video camera there just video recording how we do it and the way we do it. So we have that step in that process in place so when the next guy comes along, they can watch that video as well. So, you know, we also have a core set of values and beliefs that we all like try to follow as well and they're up on the trough. They're in the office and just six things that the boys try and achieve each day when it's with the client, with each other, with the work they do, anything like that. So it's just not how they're working, it's how they're acting as well. Then, you know, if they hit all their targets, they do or their goals, the work is good. At the end of each quarter, we try and do a big team bonding thing, whether it's, you know, go-karting or going out to dinner and stuff like that.

**Matt** [00:32:26] How was the response from the team when you do those, let's good a little get together, especially after they've been working hard and they delivered. What's the response and what some of the outcomes from the team when you have those sort of get togethers?

**Malcolm** [00:32:36] Yes, look, we've only had a couple because COVID has been tough but when we have had them, it's been awesome. It just creates a good morale, good team spirit but even just catching up for morning brekky on a Monday morning, having a brekky or just catching up Monday morning at the shed, have a chat about the weekend, you know, it's just for an hour or so. You go through a few small things, toolbox talk, safety while they are there, cool and relaxed environment. It just gets the boys in the right frame of mind ready to go for the week. We kind of found doing it on a Friday afternoon, everyone's tired everyone's [00:33:09]buggered [0.0s] after a long week working with each other. So Mondays always goes, everyone is fresh and ready to go, ready to hit the ground running.

**Matt** [00:33:17] Yes, it's good. I think what we found just for those out there that are looking at maybe implementing some of the team meetings, definitely we find our clients and our community on Monday mornings are definitely good, they're fresh, they come in, have a chat about the weekend and then go instead of back at the end of the week, it gets a little bit tiresome.

**Malcolm** [00:33:38] Sometimes Monday can be a bit hectic if you are not organised. Where are we at, are, what are we doing and all, you know, it can get pretty crazy.

**Matt** [00:33:48] Just doubling back on one of the key things that you talk about, which is culture, which is values and it's one of the key things that underpin everything that we're about in our blueprint methodology and what we do, especially around that, you know, really power up your business that's one thing having values and behaviours, just rattle off one of the key ones on that, you know, the way you do it, how you do it, what's one of the key values slash behaviours that you've got, Malcolm.

**Malcolm** [00:34:18] Yes, well, the first one is "wow." So wow is basically can you wow the client by the work you do. Wow your teammate by helping him out or something like that or even just wowing myself as the boss, you know, taking control. Other one is growth in learning, we don't know it all. Everyone's got to learn new stuff. I always try and push the boys, what did you learn this week? For example, [00:34:42] our apprentice said i didn't [0.0s] learn anything this week and I said didn't you do a block wall. Yes, I've done a block wall before but I said have you done that's style of block wall before? No. There you go, you learned how to do that one. Even if it's just minor, something simple, other one, building a family and team environment spirit. They are probably our main three that we do have.

**Matt** [00:35:04] I love that and again, it comes back to here, well you do well as you connect know, as the one percenters are connecting. Again, a lot of organisations will have values on the wall, it will be on the wall, it will be on the truck but actually never refer to it. What you do really well is on a daily basis, hourly basis on a conversation, you'll connect the dots, right. You'll connect whether it be a team meeting or a one-on-one. Essentially, it's like, well, if you stand back on a job and you look does that really wow you. Does that really wow us. Your team can really understand that okay, that's not really a wow factor, lets us then go to the next level. Would you agree on that? Is that how you really drive them to get you to go that next line and bring that better performance on a daily basis?

**Malcolm** [00:35:47] Yes because the boys always, you know, always ask me, Mel, what do you think? Basically, I'll just stand back, cross my arms and say, do you think you wow me? They'll give you the answer. Do you think that looks good? Are you happy with that? Without criticising them or telling what they've done wrong, they'll pick their parts out. They know what's wrong. So they're making the decisions, they will go and say not good enough. Let's change it. Let's do it like this then.

**Matt** [00:36:19] It's great, right? You are not wielding a big stick. This is really where a lot of business owners and leaders get it wrong where they come in there and they try and wield a big stick, you haven't clearly developed the values or the desired behaviours where your team can own it and that's a big difference. Own it. You've done a great job yourself and Kylie of allowing your team to own it. Own the desired behaviours and expectations because they know exactly what it is because you've set that this is the way we do it here,

non-negotiable. These are our rules. I don't care if you work for 20 other organisations. When you cross the white line for Brizscapes, this is how we do it here. Guess what, this is what you are going to love about working for us is that everyone owns it, everyone's on the same page, would you agree? I can then not only self assess but the team and their peers will assess as well and draw performance up and then they say, look, come on that's not a wow or that's not building team, that's not building that honesty or that transparency in terms of delivering what we're about, would you agree? Is that a key component of that pretty much the last 18 months.

**Malcolm** [00:37:29] So we try and get the team to buy in to the business, you know that they're a part of the business. They're part of the culture. They have a say. It's just not always Kylie and I going you need to do this, you need to do that because by us telling them what to do all the time when something comes up or when they have a problem, they're going to call Kylie or me, so the idea is let them make the decisions, let them think about it, let them make the call and have the constant confidence, yes, let's do it like this. Then if they do it and they make their own decision and they have screwed up, I'll just go okay, we went wrong. Have we learnt? What can we do better next time? Did I make a mistake? Did I not give you enough information? What do you need? So I'm happy for the boys to make mistakes so anyway, they're going to grow. They are going to learn and develop themselves, another one of our cultural values.

**Matt** [00:38:25] That's one of the great values that you got there, which is that learning right because I think it taps into, like you mentioned, you cannot learn unless you fail. We cannot learn unless you make mistakes and allow them to make mistakes. They've got the confidence to have a crack and make mistakes. Again, the great thing, what you've done is you try to do it, they actually can find the problem rather than bringing you. A lot of a lot of business owners, they struggle. I'm busy all day. Well, what are you busy all day for? I'm getting phone calls. What sort of phone calls you're getting? My team members keep on ringing. They got problems. Well, why are they calling you and have you not stop to think about why they actually call me, not stop to think about, you know, what you can teach them so that after you teach them once they don't have to call you again. I haven't got time for that. Well you just got to get used to having no time because you are going to be answering the phone all the time and that's credit to you.

**Malcolm** [00:39:14] Yes, sometimes it just comes down to me personally. What haven't I done correctly? Do I need to put a process in place or implement a structure so that when this thing happens again, we know what they have to do.

**Matt** [00:39:29] And that's the key thing, it's that ownership. You are not blaming your team or the client. You're looking at, as we talk about, it is that continual evolution of processes and what we talk about. Kylie, i will get you to jump in a sec, like when we talk about the how are we doing it here, how are we tracking those one percenters because if our costs are blowing out from a percentage point of view, it comes down to a lack of process or it's a process deficiency. So, Kylie, with the connecting the team, you know, obviously with the profit and loss of how we're tracking in the numbers, how are you finding that you are giving your team ownership now and driving the pricing and ordering things and doing other things like that on site? How are you really finding out over the last 12 or 18 months in transition and that growth within the team?

**Kylie** [00:40:21] Yes, look, it's been a big process getting them to take control of that side of it but it's like now with having an operations manager on board that's that one person that they can go to that's going to be doing the ordering. It's going to be connecting with

our suppliers and making sure that we're getting the best possible rates that we can be giving. We're always growing. Every single person is very important within our business. We've all got our important roles, nobody's perfect. We don't have that expectation here and like Malcolm said, you know, we're connecting with our staff and saying, okay, well, you know, what can we do differently to make this better for you next time. So it's very important that we get opinions back from our staff to make sure that everybody is happy coming to work for us every day.

**Matt** [00:41:22] On that, too, it's about one thing, being happy but they're being engaged or they're actually engaged in the brand, in the organisation they want to achieve because they're owning it and with that just tie into that operations manager because we nearly sort of finished on this is it now that fundamental piece now getting that operations manager and they're getting that someone that can really sort of drive the team as well and to give you a little bit more breathing space, especially Malcolm. We're talking about this a few months ago, we had that discussion around, it's hard to get someone, I can't find someone. One of the things that we talk about is the higher the quality of the candidate you want, the longer it's going to take. A lot of people say, oh, it's tough to get people or, you know, some people think they are just going to put a Seek out there. Then all of a sudden within a week, they're going to find a gold team member. It's just not going to be that's not the case. This is where you need to have that, the patience to hire slow, fire fast mentality whereas if you have got the right person to come along then don't hire them or just, it's a long process. This is where what you've done well is it, you know, again, this is where the process kicks in by the sales pipeline. We see our sales pipeline well in advance that we get a lot of work coming up. You can really position yourself and start to advertise for the operations manager position because you're looking at the years ahead. You're starting to go like this is the structure I need. It's not a rush. It's not like all of a sudden I've got a lot of jobs on, I need someone to help me. Then you go out and you get someone on board, not a good candidate and more importantly, you haven't got the right processes in place or the right data, the financials to make sure that they're accountable. So what you're doing is taking that time to make sure when you get that right person on board, they are supported by the data and more importantly, you'll get the information to ensure that they're delivering value to our organisation. So the question just on that one back to you then, Malcolm, is how important is it to take your time to get the right person on board? How important is it to make sure you've got the right, again, job description, induction processes in place to ensure that that individual is hired, you know, you got to pay him a good rate, so he's going to cost the business a fair bit, if he doesn't hit the ground running. What were some of the key learnings that you had there, understanding now with your process that you must have in place to really onboard a high quality individual into your business?

**Malcolm** [00:43:58] I think it started back from the finance side of things and what our conversion rates are and knowing like I've got all this work coming up and we're tossing out whether we've got an extra man on the ground or person on the ground or someone in the office. We can't just sort of get an operations manager in just because we knew we were doing a lot of work but we were also doing a lot of misses as well. So we wanted to get the one percenters right. We found out the boys were going to Bunnings a bit or going to pickups or just doing a lot of time-wasting, not really being productive on the ground working. So we decide to get the office manager in and it was a new position. We never had one before to get a man to really control the team, organise the team, get a team motivated, get them going, help with the [00:44:43]HR, Workplace health safety [0.6s] and all these other little bits and pieces but a lot of the time was then spent on, okay, what's his role. What are his KPIs? How do you define that? What's his weekly job? Then as you're

saying, Jonesy, what do we have to do to induct him to make sure he does the job well and to what we want and that's been really hard. It hasn't gone smoothly. I must say, you know, we're working with him to make sure that it does run smoothly and then, you know, if there happens to be a similar role or position come up again, then we're ready for that new position so that one will run smoothly. So, yes, it's been good and it's been a good learning curve as well.

**Kylie** [00:45:25] I think also with that one of the first processes before even doing a job description and that kind of thing, we refer straight back to our profit plan. We can then, you know, put a salary in there to make sure that we are still going to be making our operating profit, working off what are our goals in turnover and by adding that extra team member on, how are we looking financially because that is a very important thing to know that you have enough work to sustain another employee moving forward. So that's another important process in that's making sure that role is suitable for our business.

**Malcolm** [00:46:15] Spot on there Kylie, 100%, this is where a lot of people get it wrong, where they just see turnover or they are busy and they'll throw in 80k, 100k or 50k or whatever that role is without actually understanding, number one, the impact on the bottom line and number two, then what's with that extra expense that extra line item in my accounts? How much do I need to ratchet up my sale and that's a key thing that you do well, is what I want our listeners to understand is that whatever you are changing and whatever you are spending on, you know, from our perspective, within key performance, you should be generating that 15% operating profit margin. This is after you draw a wage and after you pay yourself superannuation as the owner just for doing the job. Whereas a lot of people, they they're not looking at that bottom-line. They don't understand the bottom line. They don't understand the impact of putting another person on and what are the implications there. Because they don't start with those numbers, then there's no urgency in making sure they hit the ground running. There's no way to make sure they are delivering value. There's no urgency in putting in clear KPIs and that's throughout the business and that's obviously Kylie what you've had to do is you've had to rejig all your targets and things like that, correct, because you got that extra cost. Just to clarify that because you've went through that due diligence again. Hire slow, work fast and when I talk about hire slow, hire slow means, you get your numbers right, get your processes right before you actually hire someone so that when you have that first conversation with a potential employee, you can be very clear with your financial expectations or job descriptions and KPIs are correct because you've already gone through the due diligence around that.

**Malcolm** [00:47:54] It just gives us the confidence.

**Kylie** [00:47:55] That's right, it just gives a very clear picture.

**Matt** [00:47:57] And I think tapping into it, Malcolm, like you said, it's a long-term. It's in that growth phase sometimes, it is tough sometimes. This is where you go along the journey, some people you just got to understand, are they cut out for that role because not every hire is even though they can do that the best amount and this is where everyone needs to understand too. You do your best amount of due diligence but sometimes it's just not quite right fit for that particular role. They might be better suited for another role. What I like hearing and this is why you're doing so well is for both you, you take accountability. So in other words and this is what, here it is for everyone out there, is that if an employee is not hitting the ground or hitting there mark, don't point the finger at the employee or team member. Look at you as the leader. What could you do better? How can you educate them better? Where's a lack of processes? Are they lacking confidence? Do they even know our

expectations? Do they know our values? They know actually what we're trying to achieve because a lot of team members or staff members, employees are basically treated like mushrooms, just kept in the dark, fed nothing but there is this expectation that they're going to come out firing like an elite performer, well it's not going to happen. So it's a credit to you as well. Cop some knocks on the chin and not sort of be aggressive to fight back but really sort of think about, okay, what can I do better as a leader? Again, as we always talk about, it's a journey. Both of you, you've done really well on a 13-year journey today and that's we're just finishing up now. How important were those first, you know, 11 years, tough years. How important are those initial years growing now that learning that you can now put into this next period to really escalate your business going forward? How important is that journey?

**Malcolm** [00:49:42] I think it's been a very long, tough journey initially. You know, 18 months ago, it was tough but we still, once we started working with you and Paul and Mark, you know, it was all us as well. You guys got at us. It was up to us to put the hard yards in, set the benchmark each month. Each month, we set a new benchmark, a new benchmark, new benchmark. So you guys got us but we still have to put the hard work and we have to set up biggest because it's our business. We know our numbers so now this is the new normal. This is where we are now. This is the new norm. This is our base. So we try and just push back, what's the next level? What's the next level? Then we have our end game. We know what our end game is, what we want to achieve, not just business wise, but personally wise as well. So we just try and hit those targets to get to where the end game is.

**Matt** [00:50:34] Yes, it's great and I think, look, it's been really from our point of view, we love assisting you, guiding you and what we want from our role in terms of our methodology and our processes is that you can you can have all that, as you mentioned, you can have all the targets and all the processes but unless you have the want to really make it happen, nothing will happen. It's credit to both of you to really buying into what we're about and I just love what you've done the last 18 months but I just can't wait to what's going to happen in the next 18 months with that trajectory of where you're going and given just to clarify the uncertainty of the market where we've been and what you've delivered over that period, over that last 18 months period has been nothing short of it's a great success and we are stoked to be able to assist you. So as far as this podcasts, Kylie and Malcolm, really appreciate it. Thanks for coming on board, love having you on board, love having been part of your journey today as well.

**Malcolm** [00:51:36] It's been a good one. Plenty more to come.

**Kylie** [00:51:39] Thanks so much.

**Matt** [00:51:40] Awesome and any of the listeners out there hopefully, you got a pen and paper out there, plenty of gold to start implementing and putting a business especially those that are frustrated, who are not sure where to go. Again success leaves clues and Kylie and Malcolm have left out plenty of clues out there for you in terms of what's led to their success today. So cheers, everyone.