

## **The Importance of Saying 'NO' – Why Pleasing Everyone Will Send You Broke! Grant & Renee Walker Interview Episode 4**

**Matt Jones:** [00:00:00] G'day Jonesy here.. On this episode of power up your business podcast. We speak to husband and wife team. Grant and Renee Walker who have been operating their electrical business for the past 18 years.

**Renee James:** [00:00:12] We were getting drunk on the sales. We now know that we just had all these guys working we were super busy so we thought Well there can't be any problems. And then one day we turned around we couldn't pay the bills.

**Renee James:** [00:00:22] Why can we not pay the bills.

**Matt Jones:** [00:00:23] Learn from Grant Renee how you can successfully work together as a husband and wife team and also learn some really cool processes so you can effectively manage your business better.

**Matt Jones:** [00:00:34] Today's episode is brought to you by the cube software platform assisting business owners how a plan market and improve the financial decision making to find out more about the cube. Go to [www.thecube.network](http://www.thecube.network) and click request a demonstration.

**Matt Jones:** [00:01:19] Welcome to this episode of Power of Your Business podcast. I'm your host. Matthew Jones and I'm here with my co-host Craig "Bush" Markham.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:01:27] Jonesy, How are you.

**Matt Jones:** [00:01:28] Good thanks Bush. Really excited to listen to our guests in this episode.

**Matt Jones:** [00:01:33] We've got Grant and Renee from Grant Walker Electrical. Welcome. Thank you.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:01:41] Good to see you guys. Excited about this one, a husband and wife team.

**Matt Jones:** [00:01:44] So Grant tonight you've been operating your business for 18 years now?

**Grant Walker:** [00:01:48] Yeah. Yeah. 18 years ago I started out as just a sparky. Just me.

**Matt Jones:** [00:01:53] So you start that journey but often very quickly it can change from a dream to a bit of a struggle.

**Grant Walker:** [00:01:59] You're not wrong.

**Matt Jones:** [00:02:00] And that's all I really want to share today the ups and downs and the flows. So Grant just sort of starting with you in those early days you know getting started.

**Grant Walker:** [00:02:10] Mate it was really good because pretty much divided my time between working between the surf.

**Grant Walker:** [00:02:17] The surf was good on put work off if it was bad I'd do extra work. So. Very classic lifestyle business. None of the kids we've got now either, so it was just really good.

**Matt Jones:** [00:02:29] Keeping it simple that it starts to get more complicated more complex.

**Grant Walker:** [00:02:33] Yeah then I got a little bit busier. Had to get a hand so an employee and then it just built from there. Had one employee then another one and so on.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:02:45] And for a lot of the listeners out there who have got the husband wife team. What are some of the challenges that you find? Like you know... Do you take your work home with you on stuff like that?

**Renee James:** [00:02:53] It's all intertwined. We're always working but we're actually never working. So there's advantages and disadvantages to that.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:03:01] Can you ever get away and relax.

**Grant Walker:** [00:03:03] If we go down the South Coast. From a Friday and come back Sunday night. We try not to emphasize so much on business.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:03:10] Because it's important just to get away and rest the head.

**Renee James:** [00:03:13] We're always trying. It's just a matter of how much of it you can achieve. So it's kind of either on or off. Sometimes sometimes we just go well that's it. We're just gonna draw the line. We're just not available for two weeks and we come home and we just you know mop up, sometimes one of us will go. Grant will go on his surfing trip every year and just dump me and it so deep that I really that's not good for the marriage.

**Grant Walker:** [00:03:40] It's been about four weeks time.

**Matt Jones:** [00:03:41] Well done Grant.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:03:46] I think he needs it.

**Grant Walker:** [00:03:46] Yeah.

**Matt Jones:** [00:03:48] But on that because that's one of the keys that we really try and push and believe in is that separation and it's all about quality not quantity. Sometimes when you're in that 24/7 mode work, work, work you often reactive you have a lot of time to actually reflect because often when you're doing is you're just looking at what's coming forward what's happening what's got to get done as opposed to stopping, standing back reflecting. Hey, which work are we making money on? What type of customers do we want to work for? What type of processes do we need to put in place to actually free us from the grind and that hamster wheel.

**Renee James:** [00:04:25] And that's where we really are now. We've recently onboarded a big new client and it is really really hard to onboard. We've been after them for two years. But we're very interested in them because it's the first time we can see that someone can run our business for us that they don't want a piece of me and I don't want a piece of Grant. They will accept a manager and we've had some problems in the past where we've had people come in and manage our business and it hasn't worked. So we're looking for clients now with the profits right the cash flows right but they'll accept someone other than us.

**Matt Jones:** [00:05:05] And that comes back to having the systems in place that you can put someone in there to manage a contract. It's often the client doesn't trust the processes that you may have in place. So that's why I always come to you, whereas as a business owner. The first things

from a success structure point of view is actually having processes in place.

**Grant Walker:** [00:05:24] I used to take every phone call.

**Grant Walker:** [00:05:26] Now I'm just giving it to my leading hands and all that sort of stuff. So you guys do with that sort of thing you know.

**Matt Jones:** [00:05:33] How are you feeling about that now?

**Grant Walker:** [00:05:34] Yeah it's a lot better. I get probably a quarter less phone calls a day which is pretty good at the moment.

**Matt Jones:** [00:05:42] That's good.

[00:05:42] Yeah yeah.

**Matt Jones:** [00:05:43] So the key thing there is you taking that massive step back. Allowing people to come forward and take ownership.

**Renee James:** [00:05:52] And I think a big part we have accepted that.

**Renee James:** [00:05:57] Our staff won't do it as fast as we can do it. They won't do it exactly how we want to do it and they will fail. And that's okay. And once we've on boarded that concept we're finding it a lot easier and we know that we're now at that stage of our business if we don't let it go. We're actually creating dissatisfaction amongst our clients because we're too big now to be doing it on our own. So we used to just think well we'll just throw more at it. We just work harder. We've got nothing left. There is no working harder now to get to them all that it's just actually not possible any more.

**Grant Walker:** [00:06:34] And that was my mindset to the harder I work the better it is... But Im just starting to figure out.

**Renee James:** [00:06:41] Its not even if we wanted to work harder. We actually just haven't got enough hours in the day anymore because we've got too many staff we've got too many clients. And like you know when when does this stop and we're at a point where really we just really... I Haven't picked the date yet that I want to just draw a line in the sand and say if it doesn't get easier by that point we want out. Because you've got a like we've got lots of kids the little kids say we want an easier life.

**Matt Jones:** [00:07:12] And the key thing around that is you want to be there when they're growing up you want to be there especially this day and age you want to be.

**Matt Jones:** [00:07:18] It's what I call it's about being home but actually being present in mind. So often your home with the kids you might be playing with the kids but in the back of your mind you're thinking about getting into that e-mail. You've fill out that quote. I've got to get the boys sorted. Your not actually seeing the kids.

**Renee James:** [00:07:34] That's me. 100 percent of the time. . We are always thinking about the business and that's it.

**Matt Jones:** [00:07:41] Well for myself ,my personal point of view with our business when I walk through the door or physically not physically I'm thinking I'm just getting my work hat off and I've

got to make sure I'm present in mind with my home hat on.

**Renee James:** [00:07:52] You know a lot of it stems from... I always worry about the business. I always feel like it's just about to have something bad go wrong. I never feel safe and it's actually ridiculous because if you look at it objectively it's been growing and doing well for nearly 20 years. We've just renovated this big house in bondi. We're supporting all these kids but I don't ever feel safe. So I'm always, like ok. Better watch that, gotta do this. Gotta do that. Well it's just that sense of urgency all that all the time.

**Matt Jones:** [00:08:29] I think that comes back to again. Everything relies on you. Nothing relies on an asset which in this time frame is a system and a process.

**Matt Jones:** [00:08:40] Now I want to step back for a second in your journey about 18 months ago two years ago there was a catalyst for change regarding clients non-payment, bit of a light bulb moment Renee from your point of view that really said hey. I need some more assistance and more admin support. How do I start to get more on the business rather than being reactive all the time. Just want to frame that about that 18 months two years ago?

**Renee James:** [00:09:08] We were getting drunk on the sales. We now know that. We just had all these guys working we were super busy so we thought there can't be any problems. And then one day we turned around we couldn't pay the bills. Why can we not pay the bills. Everyone's busy.

**Renee James:** [00:09:21] So we were so drunk on those sales we had lost sight of the bigger picture which is that the jobs weren't making enough money and the clients weren't paying quick enough. So if everyone had paid me on that horrible day I would have been fine. But guess what. I didn't all pay me and it actually took me another. I'm still trying to get the money out of people actually.

**Matt Jones:** [00:09:44] And that was two years ago.

**Renee James:** [00:09:46] Yeah yeah yeah. And I'm a solicitor. I mean I should be out to get money and people but for whatever reason we're still fighting that battle. So we came to realize that the client we valued most was actually a terrible client.

**Matt Jones:** [00:10:02] And you value that client because they kept you busy. . Correct.

**Grant Walker:** [00:10:04] Correct.

**Matt Jones:** [00:10:05] You're really really busy.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:10:06] On the hamster wheel. Yeah.

**Grant Walker:** [00:10:09] Thats pretty much what it was.

**Renee James:** [00:10:09] And now we look back on them and we realized there wasn't that will making us take big hits at the end of a job. They were holding us over the barrel of more work to come. Look you're gonna have to take a hit on this one but I worry I'm gonna give you that job that we're getting our profit margins down you know. Well under what our other work was because it was the volume and that was stringing us out for payment so that we were relying on probably 70 percent of our sales to come from one person. So when we couldn't pay the bills there was only one solution and it was to get it out of them. And that was a very unenviable position to be in especially when the relationship started to go bad and has now ended.

**Matt Jones:** [00:10:52] How did that help you feel? How do you feel when you finally cut it did you basically sack them.

**Grant Walker:** [00:10:59] We did.

**Renee James:** [00:11:00] Yeah we got to a point where the relationship just couldn't work anymore because they wanted something from us that we could no longer give them.

**Grant Walker:** [00:11:10] And it wasn't the fact that we no longer give them. We couldn't even we just didn't want to know.

**Grant Walker:** [00:11:16] Like we were at a point where it was to say do we keep going and keep getting used like this or do we actually say, you know what. See you later.

**Matt Jones:** [00:11:24] So that's a really courageous decision and a lot of, most of our listeners will relate to that. You know most of our listeners grew relate to the fact that they are getting strung along a lot but they like what do I do. The hard core, the decision to make is to cut it. Walk away. But that's where we really come down to confidence that's where is really as a business owner. Am I confident in myself as a leader. Am I confident in my systems. And am I really confident in our team that you know what we can actually go out and get.

**Renee James:** [00:11:54] And that's exactly what happened because when we had those problems we then went from being quite independent to getting external expert advice. So Craig is a good mate of ours. Just sat us down and said "listen to me flick em" get rid of him. I've got your back. We're going to draw that line. They're out.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:12:17] I got that from Matt 10 years ago.

**Renee James:** [00:12:21] He got all the accountants in and I worked my books and say say that figure. You need to change it. There's your problem. And to have the guts to tell your biggest client to go away. It's a hard thing. We had to put off staff which we'd never done before. We spent money while we were losing money. So we were cutting staff but putting different kind of staff in and bringing in expert advice, so where we know we're losing our biggest client we're having to put off the employees that that probably we never should have had because they weren't earning their keep, but then putting your hand in your pocket to get some more admin assistance and some fairly expensive external advice.

**Matt Jones:** [00:13:09] That's the hardest position to be in where sales are going south and your investments going north. But credit to you guys for believing yourself that you need had to make a change and make a difference. Coming back to the team members when you're saying "you didn't earn your keep". That's a classic scenario that I'm sure you would have been in where you got a lot on and you're seeing in front of you all this work.

**Matt Jones:** [00:13:31] So all of a sudden you think I need someone with a heartbeat just to jump on the tools correct.

**Grant Walker:** [00:13:36] Yeah.

**Renee James:** [00:13:36] Our accountant looked at our books within five minutes. He ran his eye down he said see that figure. He said your sales are out of proportion to your wages bill. He said get rid of three.

**Matt Jones:** [00:13:47] Did you know the percentage thought the Labor percentage at that stage?

**Renee James:** [00:13:50] It was terrible was half.

**Matt Jones:** [00:13:52] 50 percent massive. And this comes back to knowing your numbers everyone you go to. Your numbers don't just make a call off a gut feel.

**Renee James:** [00:14:02] Oh it's fine though we were busy. We were so busy and we were important we had somebody guys working for us look at great we're doing.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:14:08] It's a common trap though isn't it. If you think about what you just said Renee it's a powerful powerful position that you were in to be able to make that decision.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:14:16] But also how enlightening and how free did you feel after. Just biting the bullet and I've witnessed it all. What did you guys do it.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:14:23] And it's a great thing.

**Renee James:** [00:14:24] It's the best thing that's ever happened to our business. You know change doesn't happen when you think you're doing well or you are doing well change happens from a problem. We've got a far better idea about reporting so that we can adjust the levers. As it's going along. I can tell you off the top of my head now what our sales are, what they should be what they are, what our profit is and our balance sheet and you know what there basic things that I'm now embarrassed to say that I didn't look at. We had sales of nearly two million dollars. And I didn't know which clients were making money which weren't. I'm so embarrassed that I know that now.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:15:00] Here's the beautiful thing you're part of the biggest group in Australia. So that's a that's a membership that's a membership that we all have a card to it. And unfortunately for some of us including yourselves that memberships expired.

**Matt Jones:** [00:15:11] It's ninety nine per cent of the business owners that we see do not know the numbers. So it's that whole thing with the workshops that we do so many business owners say exactly the same as what you said Renee. I'm embarrassed to know but don't worry about it. And this goes back Grant.

**Matt Jones:** [00:15:25] What we were saying as a tradie we're taught to do more. I don't need to worry about the numbers if I do more jobs in a day.

**Matt Jones:** [00:15:32] I'm going to be better off financially.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:15:33] Matt you've run by this ever since I've known you for the last 15 years you've said to me that first day business is run by the numbers if you let the business run the numbers it'll be sustainable. You deal with more than or over a thousand tradies each year when you do presentations of Reece and everything else. How common is that number of a thousand tradesmen is this problem?

**Matt Jones:** [00:15:52] About 99 percent.

**Matt Jones:** [00:15:54] When I do it. Say I've got 30 business owners in a room. Some have just started for a year so I've been operating for 30 years. Do you know this number? Do you know your net profit margin? Do you know your labor cost? Most of the time there is no one putting their hand

up.

**Matt Jones:** [00:16:08] Especially in the trading business. We just look forward. That's the thing I've got to look forward.

**Grant Walker:** [00:16:12] Oh look I've got some jobs coming up.

**Matt Jones:** [00:16:14] I must be sweet.

**Grant Walker:** [00:16:15] Look I'm busy I'm getting.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:16:17] Clean up the toolbox because it's all presentation and all the stuff that it's important but the numbers are really the main driver.

**Renee James:** [00:16:23] The thing is that if you nail the numbers it should set you free because that feeling of risk all the time should go away.

**Renee James:** [00:16:35] Because on the 30th of every month I have someone crunched the numbers and I call Grant and say listen the sales are right the profits are right the balance sheets all right we're good to go.

**Matt Jones:** [00:16:45] What I call that is just sleeping you know having sleeping easy with a piece of moment if you know your numbers you know your sales pipeline what's coming up you know your profit margin or your cash flow you're happy days there's not you not being reactive anymore.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:16:58] Can I just touch on one point you make Renee, I reckon it's a great point.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:17:02] It's really interesting to hear you say it. I think that nervousness is also a good thing. So I think it's it's good not to be nervous because then complacency creeps in and I love that your nervousness is a new one. Now you would be nervous in reference to what you just said to your balance sheets good, your profit margins good, your wages percentage is good. If you're happy at the end of the month your nervousness goes away but if it's not good to get nervous again?

**Renee James:** [00:17:25] Not so much because I make changes.

**Renee James:** [00:17:29] So that I don't have the same problem next month or I'm choosing to have that problem like onboarding this client at the moment and I know my numbers are going to be terrible for a little while but that's okay because I'm accepting that. It's just being able to see it, take the time to prioritize it. I mean we've still got a long way to go on getting all of our analysis right. But even just having that basic level where I'm hitting six numbers and looking at them on the 30th or the first of every month probably the best thing we've done for our business in 15 years.

**Matt Jones:** [00:18:09] So I liken it too.

**Matt Jones:** [00:18:10] Previously It was just guessing and was really gambling on your decisions because you didn't know. But now you know the numbers.

**Renee James:** [00:18:17] You know what Grant used to say to me. He'd say "Well Babe we can pay the mortgage every month so we must be making money".

**Grant Walker:** [00:18:23] And we were busy. How can we not be making money. How can we not. Look at this work coming out up.

**Renee James:** [00:18:31] It wasn't actually right because we were getting an overdraft to fund it. So im like of course there's money.

**Renee James:** [00:18:37] We keep borrowing more.

**Matt Jones:** [00:18:38] Or dipping into the kitty. But now you're in that stage where you're making educated decisions.

**Matt Jones:** [00:18:43] I'll make an educated decision where as you just mentioned I'm going to maybe lose money this month this quarter but that's okay because we're going to see it rebound the following quarter which is a really powerful position to be in.

**Matt Jones:** [00:18:55] And coming back to what you're saying Bush about being you a lack of confidence or nervousness is what I frame as it's about being uncomfortable.

**Matt Jones:** [00:19:03] What the journey you've been in the last 18 months especially where you're going through a Grant is actually you're very uncomfortable what that means is you're getting out of your comfort zone. We're getting you off the tools. Looking at the number and that's being uncomfortable. If you're doing something that's not natural to you and listeners out there if you're not being uncomfortable you're not growing you're not learning and you're not becoming a better leader.

**Matt Jones:** [00:19:24] So you're really the catalyst for change has really made you uncomfortable which is great. That means you're getting better.

**Renee James:** [00:19:30] Yeah look, we constantly have this challenge between ourselves where Grant is very ingrained in what you would call that trading mindset where he's just taking jobs. And since we had those problems my mindset has changed a lot. So I'm constantly challenging him and saying listen flick all them. He can't. His idea is always well if things go bad all the little guys are to keep me going or I just want to keep taking the work and I'm sorting to him I said see this board. You have clients making 30 percent profit. You can't service them because you're too busy going and changing Mrs. Smith's light bulb in case there's a recession one day and she's going to pay your bills.

**Renee James:** [00:20:20] We've got four kids and a mortgage in Bondi. Mrs Smith ain't paying no bills anymore.

**Grant Walker:** [00:20:25] I have actually in the last probably four to six months started knocking back jobs that I never would have before.

**Grant Walker:** [00:20:33] I just say look we're too busy I can't do this. Sorry.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:20:38] What was the decision to do that? What what made you do that?

**Grant Walker:** [00:20:40] Just realizing that I can't service everyone. I've Got to pick my sort of my targets my clients.

**Renee James:** [00:20:49] And the other thing too is where in a place now where interest rates an all



time low.

**Renee James:** [00:20:58] There's only one way they're going and that's up. We don't know how hard they're going to go up or how fast but that's my next thing I'm worrying about. So I'm trying to prepare our business for that because we can all make money when the economy is good.

**Matt Jones:** [00:21:12] So everyone bubbles along.

**Renee James:** [00:21:14] So I'm trying to move our business into areas that are going to keep us safe for whatever's coming in the next five years. I like schools which are going to schools. We're trying to get diversify where our money's coming from so we've got a little bit of industrial. We've got Grants construction and we're trying to get all this work for schools. Then we kind of got our pubs. So I feel safer once the eggs are in the other basket. So it's trying to drag Grant into this process of see this where I want to go don't do what you've always done. We're trying to get here. So you have to do things different because if you're doing the same thing you're going to get the same results. You have to be doing things different.

**Grant Walker:** [00:21:58] We're just trying to recession proof the whole business too because it will come. I hope it doesn't but it will.. So the construction side booming in Sydney at the moment has been for a couple of years but it's not going to last forever. That's the work we love doing. But we realized that we actually have to diversify if we're going to survive.

**Matt Jones:** [00:22:18] So on that note. Recession proof, getting uncomfortable, looking forward. Protecting the farm as it were.

**Matt Jones:** [00:22:27] Renee, you did the big transition and this is where I want our listeners to take a heed here and utilize some of the resources out there which is what we call offshoring, using offshore assistance to assist with your admin with your accounts.

**Matt Jones:** [00:22:41] So that means they're not actually physically in your office, they're not actually physically in your state or in the country. Moving forward into that relm which is a brave new world. Correct Renee, relating to how is that transition now. Has it been about an 18 month process moving to getting that offshore support?

**Renee James:** [00:23:00] Yes. So in conjunction with these problems we had at the same time we just took this sleep and employed people to work overseas for us in the admin capacity. So that was something that was very difficult because it was something that we didn't know anything about. And it was another risk we were taking on the back of a difficult situation. But the problem I had was that I was getting so bogged down in the day to day crap that I was not getting to what was really my job which was managing the business. And I knew that if I didn't get into that management role and do the things that I knew needed to be done we're going to have a massive problem. So, we did retain one person. And now we have two to do all of our accounts and admin support. We were concerned about... Well you know it's the sweat shop. They're not gonna speak English. They're going to make mistakes. They're going to steal my money.

**Matt Jones:** [00:24:08] And these are in Philippines correct?

**Renee James:** [00:24:11] That's right. And we've had nothing but a positive experience. They cost us half what you'd pay someone to do the same job in Australia. They come to work every Monday even if there's been a festival on the weekend or a typhoon if it's a typhoon they come to work. They value their job. I've gone and seen the premises for myself. It's awesome working environment. We have an office in Sydney that mimics the office somewhat over there. Their attention to detail is

extraordinary. I ask my lady to do 99 things. She will do ninety eight. Here, we're getting a hit rate of maybe 60 percent. And that's kind of acceptable here for some reason. The Communication hasn't proved to be a problem. We Skype all day just as I would talk to someone sitting at the desk beside me. I will talk to her via Skype or message her. We have quite a personal relationship. She's been here. I go over there at the end of the day. I can't get your money because they can't get into your bank account. So any of those ideologies fall away. So it is again that uncomfortable step. But if you need to cut costs in your business it's a it's an easy one. It's a big one to cut straight away.

**Matt Jones:** [00:25:28] Well it's really an investment. It is because actually that investments freeing up time. And from my experience Philippines and other offshore sort of assistance they are high quality and they're highly educated.

**Renee James:** [00:25:43] Yeah, my accounts ladies are accountants.

**Grant Walker:** [00:25:48] She's so diligent. Sometimes when you give her a job you have to try and get them to just cut a corner do something a bit quicker. And there like "no, no I don't feel right about doing that".

**Matt Jones:** [00:25:59] You know that's the tradie in you Grant. But the support to get uncomfortable. Who he really helped you on a journey overseas who did you sort of seek out to assist you moving offshore because you couldn't do that alone correct?

**Renee James:** [00:26:16] Yep. So we got we got some advice and there was a company set up over there called Kon-vert and they helped us transition into that role.

**Renee James:** [00:26:25] So you don't just independently employ someone.

**Matt Jones:** [00:26:28] You don't just jump on a plane to the Philippines with a sign "who's looking for work".

**Renee James:** [00:26:32] That's right.

**Renee James:** [00:26:33] So that will assist with the recruitment process. They explained to you how communication come work. They give you an idea about how much you know what these people expect to get paid, what you do what you can get for your money if you want to pay this amount you get this kind if you pay a bit more you get whatever.

**Renee James:** [00:26:50] So they can take you through that process.

**Matt Jones:** [00:26:53] And they manage the desk over there as well? Can they manage on the ground over there for you do they have people over that.

**Renee James:** [00:27:00] Yes. So you'll have a couple of kon-vert employees that might take care of ten other employees that you know.

**Matt Jones:** [00:27:07] From other organisations

**Renee James:** [00:27:08] Yeah.

**Matt Jones:** [00:27:10] And is having that support they're going into the new type of work that you're going to like some of the larger companies that you're looking at they're obviously going to be admin heavy correct? Probably their compliance is high?

**Renee James:** [00:27:23] Yep some of the clients who've been going to an onboarding them and being quite extraordinary.

**Grant Walker:** [00:27:29] Takes longer to do some of their compliance than it does through the job.

**Matt Jones:** [00:27:32] And that's what suffocates most businesses when they take on those contracts. They just can't. And again tradies out there.

**Matt Jones:** [00:27:39] We know you're great at doing the job. That is the easy part. It's the admin and everything comes around it.

**Renee James:** [00:27:44] This is the level we've got to now where if you want to play with the big boys you better have some serious admin support because.

**Renee James:** [00:27:52] The compliance and the paperwork and everything they want you to do you need. We've got two or three people doing admin now they're barely keeping up. Once you get to that next level where you are trying to deal with the bigger companies. It's just not a little job you do on the side anymore.

**Matt Jones:** [00:28:12] And this now gives you that confidence that, not getting freaked out. It's all about you and that you can sleep easy now that you've got that support.

**Matt Jones:** [00:28:20] Well even though it sounds like a cliché. I'll Work on the business now instead of in it. I mean not all the time but I'm probably at least 70 percent doing the job that I'm most skilled to do and I no longer do the tasks that someone else can do and these tasks are invoicing, scheduling, trying to get paid. Following up all the basic mundane tasks correct. For most business owners it takes up all your time and not leaving you enough time to get work on the business again framing working on the business means looking forward looking at systems talking to customers.

**Matt Jones:** [00:29:05] Making sure you got the right numbers or the big six numbers. love it.

**Renee James:** [00:29:09] All Grant and I really...

**Renee James:** [00:29:12] Are continuing to try to work to and it's a process. We just want to be going around keeping everyone in their jobs. So manageing into their jobs making sure they stay in their job, make sure they are achieving their job and going around every morning giving the instructions for the day giving any support as required. And if we can get it to that and we've diversified our business then I think that we'll be happy.

**Matt Jones:** [00:29:41] I love it, because that's what we always protest and put out there that in the good times that's when you go to work hard and you prepare to thrive when others is going to better survive.

**Matt Jones:** [00:29:54] Just finishing up now.. What's one of the things for both you that you say is really going to be so for the next couple of years next two or three years is going to be critical for your success? What do you think you've got to maybe double down on and invest further and get more uncomfortable, to ensure that you are really recession proof?

**Renee James:** [00:30:11] Without giving you too big wrap. We need to get more focused on where

we want to be and do what we need to do to get there. We've got to stop just a flash new client. Oh hello. Yes. Oh you can throw me work. I'll take that.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:30:28] Shiny penny syndrome.

**Renee James:** [00:30:29] Yes. We need to say this is where we want to be. And it's a lot of that will be lifestyle choices. And then we need to go back to where we are now and say if we want to be there what steps do we have to take. And then just have the discipline to do those things even if they're uncomfortable. It's just that it's that working back process. We need an easier life.

**Grant Walker:** [00:30:57] I'm sort of at the point where I just want to trust my boys. Now, they've been with me for long enough. Give them that next step to just walk onto a job and run it instead of me having to be there all the time and look at the work and run it and then if I can get that done then I can go back to what I was doing years ago and go surfing in the middle of the day.

**Grant Walker:** [00:31:21] That sort of stuff. Have a surf enjoy a bit of things then get back to work.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:31:25] And analyze the business with your night work from a high level down.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:31:28] Grant question to you. That there's a lot of tradies as you know this is not all of them have the one thing I've picked up in this podcast that I've learnt about this dynamic husband and wife team is so good that you diversify the roles you know exactly where you sit. Now Renee is not going to be doing a fit out or a rewire of a house nor you're going to be seeing they're analyzing numbers. But my assumption is that you give Renee as much as she needs to make those jobs profitable. Renee gives you a lot of feedback saying "Grant. That's that's a go".

**Grant Walker:** [00:31:55] Yeah. That's it.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:31:56] Which is a really fortunate position to be in. What's your advice to the listeners that are going to resonate so much with your story that don't have a husband and wife team, that don't have the benefit of the two brains if you will or the thinking that you guys have together?

**Renee James:** [00:32:08] The reason our business works is because I run the business and Grant is actually really really good electrician. Grant Couldn't do any of this run the business stuff and vice versa. So we have quite a strict line and I'll say to him that's not an electrical issue.

**Renee James:** [00:32:25] That's mine now.

**Renee James:** [00:32:26] They owe us money. That's mine now.

**Renee James:** [00:32:30] We've got some dispute with someone. You're off and having like, That's one thing we don't really squabble over. We do have that quite strict line of what's yours and what's mine and our skills do compliment each other. So I say to Grant are you for real? Why did you have that conversation. You're fighting us for that. That was my conversation. I'm gonna go down and I'm gonna go clean that up!

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:32:59] It's a good point your raise.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:33:00] So Grant do you, do you coach, lead the tradesman?

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:33:05] Or is Renee going to take that conversatio? My assumption is letting the back of house, your administration and accounts and of course Renee touching public jobs in the tradesmen but you let him from a technical side?

**Grant Walker:** [00:33:16] Yeah yeah yeah I do. All I call it im construction shes admin.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:33:24] There's a boundary line like you said.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:33:27] Unless he gets really tough for you to just scream for Renee.

**Grant Walker:** [00:33:29] Unless the boy's been misbehaving then she'll step in and tell him off.

**Renee James:** [00:33:33] He manages all the jobs and how he manages the boys until there's a problem.

**Matt Jones:** [00:33:38] Comes to you.

**Renee James:** [00:33:39] That's right. And then I'll do everything to do with paper and money and any of the top level stuff that Grant's got a problem on and so I just say to my boys like we have I think 16 guys work for us now and I just say if you never see me you're doing well.

**Renee James:** [00:33:53] If you get called to the office.. That's when you know they're is a problem.

**Grant Walker:** [00:33:57] Sometimes they will and it's not even for anything bad.

**Grant Walker:** [00:34:00] A message will go around the office what have I done.

**Matt Jones:** [00:34:07] Awesome.

**Matt Jones:** [00:34:07] Look I really appreciate you coming in today. Really. Some of the key takeaways just to really frame some key takeaways for our listeners. Number one you've got to get uncomfortable to basically recession proof business. You've got to start saying No! Please do not get into that trap of just saying yes yes yes and just thinking the more you do is you know you get ahead.

**Matt Jones:** [00:34:29] But importantly you need the right team on board. As Renee spoke about you rgetting kon-vert on board your accountant on board but more importantly,Grant and Renee you'll agree to this.

**Matt Jones:** [00:34:39] You've both got to be on the same page.

**Grant Walker:** [00:34:41] Yeah that's it.

**Matt Jones:** [00:34:42] Rather than often probably Grant in the past you have been talking Arabic and Renee's been talking Chinese and you been saying "Why don't I get it".

**Grant Walker:** [00:34:49] Yeah yeah.

**Matt Jones:** [00:34:50] Now you start to get towards English.

**Grant Walker:** [00:34:52] We've started to learn not to tread on each other's toes in one area sort of thing you know.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:34:59] That's great. I love that. I love it and I know very well as you know personally and great friends. But this story is my story. This story is the story of everyone that we know it's an everyday story it's an everyday story. But there's a difference. And you said it to me once when you worked 10 years ago. There were two businesses you were working with. I was one of them and you said mate, the difference was Rene and Grant it typified that today. We made the changes. We were willing to make the changes. And Renee said she was investing more money while losing money. That's a very very brave decision to make. And for the listeners out there it's not all doom and gloom. It's actually about making the decision to make the decision and the biggest thing out of today's box for me as a business owner. Get the expert advice Tiger Woods has three coaches. There's a reason. You made that decision to invest. It didn't cost. A Cost is when you buy or sell something you feel good an investment is when you're getting a return of the return you got. You can see it now.

**Renee James:** [00:35:55] It's very hard to see the woods between the trees and yet just to have someone external come in makes a big difference and especially when it's a husband and wife family kind of thing. We get so bogged down in the detail that you really need someone just to come in and shake you up and say you know get out of all that stuff. Here's your solution.

**Grant Walker:** [00:36:18] And it's just a couple of ideas that they do throw at you that changes the way you think totally.

**Matt Jones:** [00:36:23] Well just gets you to stop.

**Matt Jones:** [00:36:24] Stand back and go. Interesting.

**Matt Jones:** [00:36:27] Didn't think of that before. Even though it's the blindingly obvious.

**Grant Walker:** [00:36:29] Well you go through with blinkers on the whole time you take them off you like Oh yeah.

**Renee James:** [00:36:34] It's like he said you just do what you've always done you just do what you've always done.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:36:40] It's pretty impressive to say Grant go from an unknown grant an expert Triesman because everyone was grant to do their electrical work. But you see Grant go from just putting that tool down to picking up the ipad to sitting with Renee, looking at the numbers and coaching his team and as you said before coaching the boys setting at the day and going surfing. Going surfing is a byproduct of doing the hard work. It's not it's not an, it's not an abdication. It's a delegation.

**Renee James:** [00:37:03] People want that responsibility as well. They don't want us micromanaging them so It's creating wins.

**Matt Jones:** [00:37:10] 100 percent. It comes down to people wanna be empowered.

**Grant Walker:** [00:37:13] Yeah.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:37:13] People want to be entrusted.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:37:15] I love what you said Matt. Take a step back so others can go forward. But if they're not doing the job you've got to manage them and you've got to get on top and which is why you know you have those hard conversations or you where you set it up.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:37:27] You set up so they don't fail.

**Renee James:** [00:37:29] And it's something you said to me to before is everyone's got 20 percent they're not good at. And then they've got 80 percent that they're good at. Whether it's personal, work or whatever. So you've just got to not focus on that 20 percent that your employee can't do and say well what are the what are they good at that 80 percent let's put them in a role where they're using that 80 percent rather than setting them up to fail on their negative 20 percent. People love Grant so he does all the nice kind of stuff a lot harder. So I do that.

**Renee James:** [00:38:03] You know you've got to find..

**Grant Walker:** [00:38:04] Good cop bad cop.

**Matt Jones:** [00:38:06] Works well.

**Matt Jones:** [00:38:07] But that's great advice. You definitely focus on the positives as opposed to always focusing on the on the negatives. So Grant and Renee thanks for coming in today. Really really really really enjoyed the conversation.

**Renee James:** [00:38:19] Thank you.

**Grant Walker:** [00:38:20] Thank you.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:38:21] Love it. When I first met Grant, Matt. He was just a young kid with black hair and a beard. Now he's an old tradesman with grey beard and grey hair has goingwell. Still got his hair!

**Grant Walker:** [00:38:30] I'm only 24.

**Matt Jones:** [00:38:33] Looking better than ever.

**Craig "Bush" Markham:** [00:38:34] Well thank you very much Grant and Renee. Great insights, insightful informative and high octane if I may. You've been listening the Power Up Your Business podcast with our host Matt Jones and you've been talking with Grant and Renee Walker from Grant Walker Electrical .

[00:38:46] See you next time.