

## Power Up Your Business Podcast Transcript

### Episode 9 – Resilience & Belief – The Journey of a Business Owner

[00:00:00] Welcome to Power Up Your Business podcast. I'm your host, Matthew Jones and in this episode, we speak to Will Sawyers, owner and operator of Plumbing Solutions based in Adelaide. Now, Will's story is definitely one of persistence, resilience, grit, patience and a number of other words you can throw in there but as you'll hear, as Will shares his story, operating his business for over 15 years definitely wasn't rosy. For the large part of it, Will was stuck on the hamster on the wheel and when we turn on that classic firefighting mode where everything appears urgent, everything appears important, and you're pretty much going day-to-day trying to work out where is the next job coming from, trying to follow up to get money to get in the bank so you can actually pay payroll or pay the team. Ultimately, the huge stress that will result in the frustrations was getting reflected onto his team and more importantly, onto his family life as well. Not understanding the numbers as well is key is that often making uneducated decisions or gut feel decisions, which would obviously then negatively impact cash flow as well because it's a bit more of a guesstimate with Will and this is a great thing with Will, is that you'll hear he's had great belief in himself. He had the pieces of the puzzle of how to run a successful business, but he just didn't know how to connect them or how to put them in the right place at the right time to really get a clear picture of the path ahead. He learned how over the past 12 to 18 months since he was really bought into our Power Up Your Business program, how he really was open to being uncomfortable, in other words, being told how he needed to make a change, being told how he had to slow down to focus on the one percentism. What we talk about and what we relate to was about less is more mindset. Rather than doing more and getting busy, slow down and focus on the key aspects of drive performance, drive profit and drive productivity, which as a leader, it's all about understanding where you deliver the most value for the organisation. It's not about running around doing jobs all the time. One of the key aspects that Will has done great here and this where you hear his stories invested huge amounts of time, energy and money into building his team. He is really allowing himself or his team to really step up and own it and he's able to take that back step to have confidence in his team, to run the organisation, run the business and the jobs for him and the result, over that last 12 month period between a great increase in revenue, a 62% increase in revenue by focusing on sales pipeline and A-class customers. The key thing here, as we always talk about what we focus on, it's about the bottom line. It's about the operating profit. It's about what's the return on investment for me as a business owner. Will achieved a whopping 471% increase in operating profit and again, it's not about by doing more or running around more, trying to fit more hours in the day. It's about slowing down and the outcome of that Will stress is down massively, his confidence in building a great business is huge and his team is now really engaged to lead the business. They really own it. They're really stepping up and taking a lot of accountability, which takes the pressure off Will. So this is a great story, everyone, especially those businesses out there, who may have been operating for a long time, are not sure where to go. You may have the belief but not sure what pieces of the puzzle you need. So Will is a great story so really enjoy this one everyone, cheers.

[00:03:29] Because there's too much on the line you're sacrificing right now and your family to benefit, you're going to make learning the passion for yourself. I think if may come to realize that he.

**Matt** [00:03:51] Will, great to have you on board on this episode of Power Up Your Business podcast. Will is operating Plumbing Solutions in Adelaide so thanks for jumping on board Will.

**Will** [00:03:59] We welcome that, thanks for having me.

**Matt** [00:04:01] So you've got a great story and always love discussing business with yourself. You are a well-read individual in Business 101, obviously running your tradie business as well now for around 15 years, Plumbing Solutions for 15 years?

**Will** [00:04:15] That's right, yes.

**Matt** [00:04:16] Obviously in the last couple of years to sort of moving away or not maybe moving but maybe creating another division, which is the building aspect as well of your organisation, correct?

**Will** [00:04:25] Yes, correct.

**Matt** [00:04:26] And just in those early years, like coming back to the early years, the formative years of running your business, as I always like to say, how are you feeling now that that decision that you made and this goes for every business owner, that decision you made, when I want to get, I don't want to work for someone else. I want to get my business card. I want to get started. How are those sort of formative years or those early stages of running a business, how do they look for you or work for you?

**Will** [00:04:50] If I'm reflecting back most of the way we operate, it was just reactionary. You'd try and find work, get it done and try and find more work that was the rotation of the way we operated for a long time. I finished off with my last employer and was contacted within weeks by a builder saying, can you come and do some work for me? I just I said to him at the time, no, I want some time off between when I finished up and when I wanted to stop and that was my introduction to the world of building when you are the top position. So they demanded and then we reacted and that, like I said, was like that for a very long time.

**Matt** [00:05:32] Essentially you were dictated by whatever happened on the end of the phone and that classic sort of that firefighting mode there where it's just like everything appears urgent and that feeling of out of control. How long are those early to feel like some sort of from the get go even, sometimes there is a bit of a honeymoon period where the first six months, 12 months or even 18 months that's pretty good. You know, got a bit of freedom, see some cash sort of rolling in at that time, not understanding that you are still going to pay tax and a few other liabilities. From your point of view when did it start to really bite, I suppose, on your personal life when you went, shit, you know, I really haven't got control or even I wanted more money and more time really feeling like I'm enslaved to this job when did it sort of start to bite?

**Will** [00:06:14] Well, just before we get to that, just to begin with, as a business starter, it's great getting that feeling that people actually want you and that you have a product that's in demand. So the first, let's say, one to two years apart from the tax issue, the federal government has a requirement that everyone out there needs to oblige that is, they need their money. They run a business just like we all do.

**Matt** [00:06:40] How can they be so unkind?

**Will** [00:06:42] What do you do? You got the inevitabilities in life, you pay taxes and you die. So the first couple of years, they were great, it was nice being in demand. The product

we produced was right. So we were very high level in what we delivered. Fantastic and then you kind of jumped on the hamster wheel and did that for a while until eventually I ended up working huge hours for very little money. We didn't have any systems and processes to fast track or to smooth out anything within our business, pretty much, except for we were using a reasonable accounting package in MYOB and it came to a head about five years in when by that stage I got married, had a child. She was about three. I had a one year old in the ground and our three year old said to my wife, Mommy, when is Daddy going to have enough time for me? At that particular point in my life, that's when I realized, right, something has to change here.

**Matt** [00:07:42] Yes, that's a big sort of slap in the face, right, that's a big like, okay, I've better stop and have a look in the mirror and sort of see, what's important in my life.

**Will** [00:07:50] It was just that moment when I realised this is not what I signed up for. I thought I was going to have freedom to work when I chose to, employ staff that would do all the right things all the time and that I was looking towards the good life.

**Matt** [00:08:04] And that was around that five years in sort of stage, was it?

**Will** [00:08:07] Yes, four to five years. I don't remember specifically. I could easily work it out, but yes, that's just that particular time in business where I had a personal need that had nothing to do with the business and the business just wasn't producing what I thought it would produce.

**Matt** [00:08:24] And it was a common stage where that up to that five years where most business owners, up to around 80% of businesses shut down within the first five years and because it got to that point exactly where you were, where it's also a realisation where, hang on, how many years I'm in there. Now it's pretty daunting when you count your fingers. You go hang on, one, two, three, four, five years now. When you look at it, then you go potentially, I would have been better off just working with someone else. I definitely had more time for my family. It comes that realisation where that reward, am I getting a reward for all the sacrifices and this is for every business owner out there listening to it will attest to it, it's just like you open up with rose coloured glasses, you open your business and you're expecting a lot of things to fall into play but as you appreciate Will correct, running a business is totally different to being good on the tools and being good on the tools doesn't roll over to being good at business, correct?

**Will** [00:09:14] You could be an absolute gun in any industry, any format, any type of style but in these guys, what I've discovered anyway is that learning about how to run a business is very different to learning how to run a decent job. They run concurrently but they're not one and the same.

**Matt** [00:09:32] That's a good point there. Look, I think it runs concurrently and that's where a lot of people struggle to make that transition from being a good tradie to run their own business, getting a business card and starting to because it is a totally different list of responsibilities when you run that business but a lot of people cannot run the job and run the business at the same time. Most people struggle with that they just think, well, Jonesy, that sounds good and it's part of the training sessions that we do and the training sessions that you've attended in the past as well that we've done as well. There's a lot of people there go, yes but Jonesy that just that's not me. I just got to be focused on the job. As we know, there's a dead end there. You can't keep pushing in that so in terms of that transition and that moving away, moving to that business owner, so what was the next

step around that five-year mark or so? What was the next undertaking there that you had to sort of reflect on and say, okay, what needs to change in your habits?

**Will** [00:10:25] A lot, I had a lot of staff and at that stage realised that I couldn't be out there working with them. So I tried to transition off the tools and did what I thought was the right way of moving forward. It turns out in hindsight, it wasn't that I still tried and then tried to bring in more work and generate more business and do what you'd expect when you came off the tools part time. We had a lot of overhead. So as we grow and employ staff, there were a lot more overheads, which is expected. What I didn't expect were things like how much time it would take to manage staff to make them do the type and style of work that we refuse to compromise on. So all of a sudden my time went from being on the tools to being pulled in all different sorts of directions that I had no idea even existed. We ran with that for quite some time until eventually I had enough and decided to scale right back down to just me because when you speak to people out in any industry that you're in now, they will pretty much tell you what you want to hear, and that is that you're better off just going back to yourself. It's so much easier and is less stress and all these things.

**Matt** [00:11:46] I'm making heaps more money now by myself.

**Will** [00:11:47] That's right.

**Matt** [00:11:49] Takes more time.

**Will** [00:11:50] Takes more time exactly, so I did that and that's just not true either. So all of a sudden you're selling your time again. So you are the one and all, you are the one that takes the phone calls and does the jobs and you get busy again. You get really busy. Then suddenly once again, you're playing firefighter.

**Matt** [00:12:11] Or you get sick or you hurt your back and you can't get on the job. This is [00:12:15]key to other business [0.0s] owners. They haven't got a lot of time. They haven't got the adequate insurance as well. They haven't got a good income, insurance or other insurances there that if you can earn, it just becomes a spiral. I think it's a classic scenario where you start with one person and then this is where for listeners out there so we call the term growing broke, which is that classic way I'm going to grow, grow my team, grow my jobs, grow my customers, grow my vehicles. So everything else is going north and unfortunately my profit and my cash flow go south and the headaches are going north as well and that's when it comes to that stage where was it was like, well I've given it a [00:12:51]red hot crack. [0.0s] I'm done, I'm done. I'm now going to go back to myself and just keep it simple and just go simple. This is one of the things that I'm really passionate about, as you know, we're passionate about that to go down that track that you went down, you invested a lot of blood, sweat and tears over a long period of time that if you did it right at the start, you could have leverage that a lot better without the pain in the heart. I can again, as we say, that success leaves clues. We're all in the journey together. How was that learning process for you? Again, sometimes you've got to go through that right to appreciate what you need to do in terms of changing and for better outcome but how was the pain of going through that and learning through that process of gearing up and then scaling back down.

**Will** [00:13:34] Well, there was nothing comfortable about it. It was just a necessity. So once again, you feel like external pressures influence your decisions continuously and you don't get to make the decisions you want all the time because you're too busy. I mean, you have to make money. You've got to feed your family. So one of my interesting points that I

did when I first started the business was I knew I didn't know anything about business. I was a good tradie but didn't know anything about business either here and in South Australia, business, I say, is an operation that helps businesses. My auntie put me on to what they had to do, the South Australian Young Entrepreneurs Scheme. So I went through that and graduated to learn more about business and the interesting thing about that particular course was it was great and they gave us exposure in all different areas but it was kind of a snippet. So they gave you a little bit of an understanding about everything to do with legals, accounting, marketing and business values and even as much as personal grooming. There was a lady who was involved with that that was interesting.

**Matt** [00:14:39] I can see now that you obviously have done well with that person. You look like a million bucks.

**Will** [00:14:46] I don't know about that but irrespective of that process, it still didn't teach me how to stitch everything together. So eventually it came to a point with myself and the business where I just needed someone to teach me how to stitch it all together. So I knew how to find work. I knew how to produce it to a fantastic standard. I knew how to invoice. I knew how to do all these little bits and pieces, [00:15:11] buy [0.0s] products [00:15:12] cheaply [0.0s] and different elements within a business, but not how to operate the entire process outside the office, how to market correctly, how to add value to our clientele that's kind of where I ended up and refused to give up. Any time you read any documentation or philosophies around business, you can't give up. So I decided no, I won't give up, I'll keep going. Apparently eventually, somehow, miraculously, it's all going to work out.

**Matt** [00:15:43] It is just going to open up and there we go, there's a rainbow, there's the end of the rainbow.

**Will** [00:15:47] Which never comes.

**Matt** [00:15:49] But the thing that you talk about there, which is spot on, which is, is resilience and grit and persistence and whatever other word you want to throw out there, the throwaway word is that it is a journey for a business owner and it's amazing what people do, it's the old classic. Most people overestimate what they're going to achieve in three years. They overestimate, I'm going to be a millionaire within three years and actually underestimate what they can achieve in 10, 15, 20, 30 years by building on that IP and doing it right. But unfortunately, people get to that three, four year and the stats prove it across all industries that most people give up. Most people do give up. Most people, they are copper beating. As I say, it's a tough gig running a business, but they actually don't want to learn from it. A lot of people think it is a way around but listen, if things aren't right in your patch right now, don't see yourself as a failure. It's just part of the journey. This is a great thing about the sisterhood or the brotherhood of being a business owner. It doesn't matter what industry is it, we're all on that same journey and it is about getting belted and you're putting yourself out there. Often you can get knocked back on a job or a client leaves you or you look at your profit loss, you don't make any money. You owe people. You can get doubt on yourself but I think we've all got to look at it and it's a testament to you, Will, like you said you've definitely hung in there and you've done the hard yards. You've got all the learning from the A to Z, the book of learning, the book of Will. You've got that there now and you've hung in there. Now it's about, the worst thing that could happen now is not leveraging it right, not actually combining it, working smarter, intelligently and as you alluded to before, you got to get out of your comfort zone. Most business owners do not want to challenge themselves. They don't want to know the

numbers. They don't want to speak to their team members. They don't want to have a team meeting. They don't want to speak to their customer. They want to serve a customer. They don't want review. They don't want to get out of their comfort zone. Big thing that I want to do is that I want to say no to a client. So the key thing and I want to talk about some process that you've really worked on, how has that been for you about that comfort zone? Getting out of that comfort zone, what you've been used to, to now, as you say, would you do a really nicely piece it in all together, piece all the puzzle together? How important is that to get out of that comfort zone? One thing hanging in there, that's great, but you've got to get out of the comfort zone to ensure that you make the appropriate changes.

**Will** [00:18:05] The first part about what you just said, Matt, following on from before, if you're in business, you are going to get beaten up and beaten around by whatever means, it won't be physical of course, but you will have terrible days and dizzying highs and terrifying lows. If I've learned anything from business is the old adage that when one door closes, another one opens. Grit, definitely you need to have grit and have the confidence that when one deal doesn't work out or one job's not going well, you do have the ability to turn it around. I think when it comes to implementing new processes and what we do now that's different, I think getting out of your comfort zone, I guess, is what you're touching so that's crucial. You need to do things that you normally wouldn't do one little by at a time, one little try at a time. Until eventually it becomes natural.

**Matt** [00:18:59] As you say, get used to being uncomfortable because you are challenging yourself, you are challenging the norms of what as a tradie, what we're used to, we're totally reversing what we're used to. We're used to getting on a job saying, yes, getting a lot done, working hard, whereas as you know now with what we do with our coaching and our methodologies, it's about less is more. It's about trying to do less activity, bit more about the quality of the work that we do in terms of working intelligently. I think that's one of the things where you're doing just to fast track, obviously just some of the results that you've done in terms of the outcomes now, like in the last period of your reporting period, 62% increase in revenue, which is awesome, as we say that is awesome especially 2020 is a difficult year but the big thing is obviously the bottom line with the 470% increase on the bottom line, which is massive and a great margin around that, over that 20 odd percent operating profit margin, 25% operating profit margin. Now you don't get great profit margins unless you get uncomfortable. You don't get great profit margins unless you put the success habits in place. You don't get great margins unless you stop and reflect of yourself as a leader because what we see and correct me if I'm wrong, smashing your turnover is not overly that hard. Building a turnover, growing broke is not that hard. I ramp up my marketing, win more clients, put more guys on, growing the top line is not hard, but growing the bottom line while the topline is growing can be very difficult because obviously growing the top line, you're getting more busier. There are more things happening. So it's a credit to yourself and this is where I think with our community, like everyone is doing more but importantly, we're doing the right success habits to maximise the bottom line and that's what we're in business for. It's just amazing and it's just heart wrenching when we do reports and we see some tradie business owners and some business owners in general where they smashed it. They've had 200% increases on their revenue for a year. They've never worked harder, never seen their kids, didn't take a time off and look at the bottom line, because, again, I never had time to put the habits and to look at their scorecard every month or every week. They work out. They've actually made their money. So they've just actually worked out that this has been great. I've just smashed myself for a year and haven't moved my personal situation forward. I haven't increased any investment in my personal life or personal growth or relationships because I've been focused on the

business. So this is where we are just coming back to yourself as a real credit to you getting uncomfortable and really putting the success habits in play to start to get those awesome results on the bottom line.

**Will** [00:21:34] It's been fantastic. The comfort zone thing, one of the elements we discussed is, of course getting off the tools and looking down the business instead of being stuck in it the whole time. For me personally, I was very uncomfortable. Still is because you're used to being out in the trenches with your fellow comrades, getting things done and all of the leading by example mantra, but then getting uncomfortable with stepping back out of the business and watching has had the most unbelievably good effect on the business. Yes, as you touched on, the results are in the numbers.

**Matt** [00:22:07] It's the scorecard, right? You can't that's a fact.

**Will** [00:22:09] Yes, I can't believe it, honestly.

**Matt** [00:22:11] I like the conversation we had a while ago. You get a bit itchy because you had so much time and you didn't realise what do I do with all this time because again, you had that compulsion, because of that path of least resistance of who we are. We had that compulsion of I've got to be out there doing more. I've got to be out there doing more because you think if I'm not doing more, we must be moving ahead, but now getting uncomfortable working on the business, you're now understanding and appreciating and seeing the results of the outcome of working on the business and working on the key areas of business. Again, it's like leading by example, leading from the front, no great general in the army leads from the front in terms of going into a battle. They're obviously on the back. They're trying to steer the ship. Think of it that way, it's just that and that's why you're doing a great job steering your ship and the habits that you're putting in place and with your team with [00:22:58] **Emma** [0.0s] and the admin and working through the team, you're doing a great job. They're putting good processes in place. So you got good clarity now that you can actually start to understand the numbers.

**Will** [00:23:07] Phenomenal clarity now, if I rewind the clock to before I got involved with you Matt, we had no idea. I couldn't tell you until we met with our accountant what our numbers were and that would happen every six months or so if we're lucky. Mainly look at your scorecard at the end of the year like you would at the end of the season and you can't rewind time. So I'd rather be productive than reactionary and those numbers that we can now see, you can work on and that's been great. As a tradie, you get taught as an apprentice to work harder, push get things done, be more productive, why did it take so long as a supplier, all those little things and so you carry those into your career. As soon as you step out into a business that's just second nature, that's what you do and it's a bit of a [00:23:55] **failing.** [0.0s]

**Matt** [00:23:56] Yes, it is.

**Will** [00:23:57] You do need to be the general on the hill with the binoculars and not down with all your fellow workers to get a clear picture.

**Matt** [00:24:06] That's that classic tradie, we are hardwired to do more, do more, do more and don't stop. We've got to think. We've got to keep doing things to be productive and profitable by getting uncomfortable and taking the time to check the score, making and understanding the numbers. How much more confidence has that given you in your future?

**Will** [00:24:26] I can't really explain how nice it is to have the confidence around that. It has changed everything. So we've gone from a point where we employ people because we're busy to now begin to run a business and employ people because we know we need them because we can measure our productivity and profit for each and every person and everything within the business. Just that level of control or knowledge gives me a huge amount of confidence, growing and we're still growing.

**Matt** [00:24:59] Well, that's our theme now, it's just about growing sustainably and profitably and measured. You've done a good job of really buying into the profit planning and how we budget going forward and making sure that if we put someone on, we're going to make sure we've got the appropriate level of income coming through to ensure that the bottom line doesn't change and that's reflected in the results that you've achieved to date. So and again, like 18 months ago, it was about 18 months ago, you attended one of the [00:25:24] **Reece** [0.0s] training sessions and we connected straightaway and that's what resonated with myself, was that yet you get it, you know business, you are well-read, you are well-versed. It was just amazing because we were just joining the dots for you. It was really just joining the dots for you, number one but then more importantly, you started to implement it effectively, has made a massive change. So the big thing is, it's the little things that really made the big change.

**Will** [00:25:51] No, that's right, I think with everyone out there in business at one point in time or another, you're looking for someone to help you and I still feel that in the 15 years we've been operating, I'm always looking for someone to help me. The trouble is generally there is no one out there to help you or no one that speaks your language or that's not quite right, there's always someone out there that would be out there for you to help you, but it's a matter of finding them and that particular time when I met you and heard about what you offer and your business. I've told you Matt, I said to myself, where the hell has this guy been? This is exactly what I'm after, someone that can assist me in business and help me be more successful in what I do and to learn that learning was the most important thing for me. So, of course, you set up the chat and the rest is history.

**Matt** [00:26:44] And the cool thing is, which is what I love, is that you always challenge as well. The good thing is you challenge why or hang on, this is not good enough or where do we get value, which is great and that's the thing where I think a lot of business owners also just think, you know, I'm going to get help or there's a magic pill or there's a silver bullet and that automatically is going to change. Now, as you know, that doesn't happen and this is why anything in life unless you're willing to actually put in, get uncomfortable, make changes, make sacrifices, you pretty much do the reverse of what you're hardwired to do, nothing's going to change.

**Will** [00:27:17] There is the cargo ship analogy where you can't just stop and turn around, if you're going to make any changes, they are slow, they are small and they are incremental, but eventually everything turns around and you're heading in a different direction that is better.

**Matt** [00:27:30] I like that analogy. Unfortunately, some people think, they just want to be a speedboat, just take off and it's all going to happen. It just doesn't happen and this is what it's all about. It's that sustained level of success and growth, which is what you've done. Now, one thing that you've done really well and coming back to with your team, and I think I really like people and especially our listeners, the ability to tap into this, which is obviously the forefront of driving a sustainable business, is that you've done a great job of



recruiting your team and really getting them to buying and making them part of the leadership group. So how has that been in terms of what are some of the key things you've really worked on with your team to give them the confidence and really being proud of your brand?

**Will** [00:28:13] I've always wanted to have staff that were proud of working for us. One of the things that I make sure I do is thank all of our staff routinely. It's amazing how much a thank you that's well meant, is well received and that brings with it loyalty. Recruiting staff is always troublesome for any business. So we have always looked for great people that follow the same ethos of what we do. We do try and hire people slowly and not in a reactionary way but just because we're busy and I've always recruited outside the boundaries of advertising. So I think we've advertised that position once or twice and we've never actually regretted from that advertisement. We've always gone within the industry itself to try and find good people that marry in with what we do. We've had it from TAFE, for example, which for those out there that are after new staff, TAFE can be a world of help identifying great people. Our suppliers have been great as well and then existing staff has found other people for us so that's been great but really making sure we tell everyone that's within our business that they are highly valued and we love the fact that they work for us. Just this last Monday, we were having this discussion around what more we can add to their position and training and is there anything else that they would like to have that was really well received and they gave us great, honest feedback.

**Matt** [00:29:43] I think and I will give you a big wrap here and just let listeners know in our community, key performance community we've shared what you've implemented there on that Monday morning meeting before you even get started. You have a meeting; go to a cafe offsite, so it's nice and relaxed. Essentially, everyone has jumped on that. The majority of their clients have jumped on that and implemented that on a Monday morning. It's just a raving success. So in terms of what you've implemented there on that Monday morning, how important is that Monday morning catch up with the team where it's relaxed. You can sort of share, obviously, some goals or guides or plans for the week, but it really, I suppose, sets the scene for the week that, yes, let's get some good momentum. We are a team. Let's work together. How important has that been to really engage your team so that they are committed to the goals?

**Will** [00:30:31] Really important, 100% important, in essence, what we do is we are interacting with their own lives, not just viewing them as employees and so on a Monday we catch up, we have breakfast together, we spend an hour running through the jobs that have been completed. What's got to be involved, all that normal stuff you'd expect within a business but the meeting always kicks off with how was your weekend? How are you and everything around their personal lives so that's just been fundamental. It's made our staff feel more valued and they come to work on Monday, fresh, ready because they've got all their fellow staff around them, and so they make each other accountable for that, too. I can't even begin to tell you the values it brings to any business that tries it.

**Matt** [00:31:18] Success in terms of implementing that Monday morning catch up, now, everyone in our community has done it and have just been raving about how, again, a lot of them were skeptical, as they ask, what are we in a meeting for? What is he going to do? Some of them have said they used to have chronic sick leave, their sick leave now is down, especially on a Monday, because they have it on the Monday morning but just the level of engagement, the buy in from the team, I think it just comes down to it's a simple thing. They are feeling cared. They're feeling like, you know what, actually this organisation is actually empathetic of my situation, background or whatever is happening.

So it's that feeling of empathy as opposed to a boss with a stick, which again, you would have been the same Will, growing up as an apprenticeship. It will just be like don't even say anything, don't look sideways, you just do it right. I am just going to hit you with a stick that was our generation or my generation back then, it has changed a lot now. If you want to really leverage your brand, leverage your business and power up your team, you got to actually give them the time and it's a credit to you what you've done, really investing time, energy, money and everything in between to get your team up to speed and that's why now, you can tell me how many times a week you're doing Pilates during the week or yoga during the week? You are a yoga fan, aren't you?

**Will** [00:32:32] Only twice.

**Matt** [00:32:33] Twice a week, just doing a bit of [00:32:35]salute to sun or kumbaya, [1.3s] right?

**Will** [00:32:38] That's repairing the body damage that's happened throughout the years of being a plumber.

**Matt** [00:32:42] Working hard.

**Will** [00:32:43] What you just said; I was taught on my first day on the job, my boss said, I don't pay you to think. I pay you to dig that was my introduction but then going back to Monday meetings and for everyone out there, what we chose to do was let's try something different and get out of that comfort zone once again. How about we invest an hour of our time and business expenditure to get all of our team together, feed them, get them coffees, whatever they like, and then send them on their way and we'll see what happens. What happened, though, was instead of people coming to work or staff coming to work on a Monday and dragging their feet and they talk among each other at a yard about how their weekend was and whatever happened and you get a minor level of performance on the remainder of that day on a Monday, they come into work clean out their vans between eight and nine, nine and ten we meet, but then from ten and the rest of the day, the productivity increased 30%. So it didn't matter that we lost two hours of trade in the morning. The fact is we picked up so much more for the rest of the day and it set the scene for the entire week. So all of our weeks now have more productivity and that's then created more profitability.

**Matt** [00:33:59] And the great thing is and this is where it's measured, it's measured in that 25% or 28% operating profit margin and there is what I want everyone, the listeners to understand is that so what was done in the profit plan in the budget is HR, human resources expenses, you know, team meetings are to really educate and engage a team. We're allowing 200 bucks a month or 500 bucks a month, whatever that may be, in basically essentially a team engagement [00:34:23]kitty. [0.0s] You're measuring against that and again, this is where a lot of people think, I'm not going to spend that or I can't afford to take them off for an hour and this is where a lot of people get it wrong. A lot of business owners get it wrong where they think they are losing that hour. They just focus on losing the hour for that week. They don't see the productivity for the other 39 hours during the week and everyone goes, no, I am going to lose an hour. It's going to cost me an hour but they just focus on the cost. They focus on that last hour or they focus on that 500 dollars. They don't see that this is going to be an investment in time and money and it's going to get the payback is going to be unbelievable in your most important resource, which is your team. They are out there. They are pushing your brand. They are going to be attracting good clients for you. They are going to be attracting good team members for you

but it's amazing still, and especially on those in all the industries or across the tradie industry, still has this thing about I don't want to invest in my team or they might leave me so they might leave me. I don't want people to think about don't worry, if they leave you, what happens if they bloody stay? I said, they stay and you don't train them. How bad is that? So it's just I guess, I'm a tradie and we've got this backward thinking. No, I'm not going to invest in them. I'm not going to invest them. I don't want to get better because they might leave. How does that work out? How is that working for you? Generally not that good but look, I think that's great. The other thing that, too, Will and just sort to finish up with, you've done a really good job, too, with not only doing those meetings, but really trying to focus and this is a long-term game, right? Building the training in, building like a training plan and modules, essentially modules for your team so that they can really grow and increase their skill level.

**Will** [00:36:07] Absolutely, yes, so all staff, anyone in a job should want to learn you'd expect and with learning comes growth or with growth comes learning, whichever way, our staff have loved it. They do love learning more. I've had guys come to our business because they hope they can learn more, plain and simple besides reverse psychology, invest in your team and it's amazing how they invest back into you and your business.

**Matt** [00:36:33] Yes, it's great and I think that's the thing where again, there is a lot of people and we're not quite connected with that aspect of investing in the team and they'll give back. It's amazing, too, because you're doing a great job again, habits. You're making that a habit that Monday morning now is just such a habit so you have ingrained that, if you stop that or tweak that, your team would be like, what's going on? Like, a lot of times sometimes business owners, you think, the time don't realise this or they don't appreciate certain things but if you make a change to their habits that can have a total change to their routine and obviously their performance. So now it's become such ingrained in your team and really driving that and obviously, how are they then coming also prepared to those meetings in terms of sharing learnings or coming up with new opportunities? Is that just as general dialogue Will, too, in terms of the level, the quality of the dialogue now without you actually having to ask them, they are really now proactive in putting forward recommendations, ideas and learnings?

**Will** [00:37:27] Yes, they're very proactive. I think, to begin with, it took a while to generate that level of honesty that they will bring now to a meeting that would tell me exactly how it is, that will tell me exactly how a customer or a job or whatever it was, there's full transparency and they get the same from us. We're fully transparent with them. It does nothing but [00:37:49]breed [0.0s] a great culture and that's all it does. It brings with it way too many benefits that I never even knew would have existed and from there, I wouldn't even consider getting rid of that Monday meeting so much so that if I couldn't go, I've still said of the guy's go to a cafe and have breakfast and put it on the tab. It's that simple, just then meeting up in a neutral place as well, it's fantastic. You know, they all go to the yard or wherever people may rotate. It's just somewhere different. It's neutral territory that's just the way it's got to be as far as I'm concerned now.

**Matt** [00:38:28] Two things I want to double back, one, that definitely having a neutral environment that's where people need to understand and maybe they haven't really connected in some of their meetings and maybe get that neutral environment so that it feels like they're not under the pump or under the spotlight. The key thing that you mentioned there as well, where it does take time on the initial few meetings, you're not maybe getting that buy in or it's a bit quiet, [00:38:51]this is what I want our listeners and [0.0s] business owners to think about, I'm sure a lot of people listening to this,

[00:38:54] I've tried the meeting. [0.0s] You might've done it once or twice. You might have done it for a month and then you go, it's not happening, it's like what you're saying before you go have that grit, determination to keep it happening and give your team members the time and they are getting used to the rhythm, they're getting used to the habits, they're getting used to being more confident in speaking and they're not afraid to speak up so that's another good point that you brought up that it does take time and you have to be patient with that as well, correct?

**Will** [00:39:22] Absolutely and off the back of that, when we're looking at our clients, like if someone out there that's listening thinks that the clients that are waiting for them at seven in the morning are going to be disgruntled if they're not there until ten. Well, then maybe your clients are part of the problem in your business as well. What we found is if we tell our clientele on Monday that we can get to their job at 10 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. or whatever the time is after our meeting, most of them have been very receptive. They don't mind.

**Matt** [00:39:51] On that, I know a lot of customers are receptive when you say, no, we're having our team meeting, we're having a planning meeting, this is what we do. It's just like any other business. You call up a real estate. I say, no, we're offline from nine to ten because we have our team meeting. You go to a retail store or whatever, it's just common ground in most industries but for whatever reason, the construction trade industry people just think, you are going to be there at seven and, you know, there's no sort of appreciation for it now. Hang on, we're actually running a business where we're having team meetings and I like what you said that is, as you mentioned, sometimes there are certain clients there, maybe they are wrong clients. They don't really appreciate you then it's good to say no to because we obviously want to be dealing with people, clients that really appreciate and respect how we do business, which comes back to the rules of the game, not the rules of your game. This is how we do it here that's fine. You don't want that, Mrs. Jones that's totally fine. I don't get emotional but this is how we roll. Good luck. We see you down the track. Also to saying no to a client in that respect to that takes confidence and also a fair bit of time and the ability to have that confidence would you agree in the understanding that it's okay to say no to clients?

**Will** [00:40:59] Absolutely, once again; it's just that momentum thing. It takes a while to build it and my mantra, if someone calls to book a job on Monday morning is no problem. We have a staff meeting until 10am. No one argues with it. Everyone accepts it and then, like I said earlier, you then get full productivity from your staff from the time they go to work after the meeting. They're happy and they're content and they're [00:41:26] fed. [0.0s] There are coffees and a better catch up and off they go for the week.

**Matt** [00:41:30] I love it, like in terms of that engagement with the team and obviously, the great thing is coming back to the scorecard, it's evident there that investment is paying massive dividends on the bottom line, which is awesome. So just finish up, Will what is a point or two or a takeaway that any potential business that may be struggling or whatever, what are some of the things that they should look at or what's in your journey? What would you say to someone, go look, here is the number one tip, do this.

**Will** [00:41:56] To begin with, you never to get to the end without starting. I think if you think in your business there could be something you could change or shift, just give it a go. It's definitely worth it and if it doesn't give you the results that you want to begin with, it might take some time or it might not even be the right thing but it would lead on to something else. It always does that would be my number one so just giving it a go. Number two is the underlying you need to stick it out come hell or high water. If you give

up, you will never know what you could have had. I'm so glad we went through all the carnage of business life that I've been through that most of us go through, I stuck it out to the bar and I have no intention of backing off or closing. I have been one of those people that looked on Seek. I haven't done it for a very long time now but I definitely have. I've stayed the course. Staying the course is paramount to success.

**Matt** [00:42:52] And I think in line with that too, which you alluded to before, just make sure that you got that right team in your corner. Just to make sure you can navigate and also be honest with you as well. Sometimes if you go down the wrong track, you just got to be stopped, you know and be surrounded by people and that's the thing like with our community as well. Would you agree? If you want to go forward, you want to succeed, you want to be a winner getting that group or surround yourself with the right type of people. There's a lot of people out there that will say, oh, we'll look, you've been doing it for X amount [00:43:20] why did you stop now? And [0.6s] that's really important as business owners, leaders, entrepreneurs, whatever that might be, you got to be in that positive mindset because that positive mindset will gain momentum. So it's a pretty simple shift gears or start to change the way in your personal life, who you operate with or who you hang around with, and more importantly maybe what discussions you bring up with certain people because I know for a fact that certain family members, they are not going to bring up business around because they did said doomsdayers.

**Will** [00:43:47] You need to get deaf. You have to cut out the white noise. It's everywhere. As you touched on, it's hard to soar like an eagle when you're surrounded by turkeys at all times. My last thing would be trust your gut. It's remarkable how you internally know what's right for you and your business.

**Matt** [00:44:08] This is what I think with some people now. There's such an overload of information. You know, I talked to some people and they've read a thousand books. They've listened to a podcast. They've done this, they've gone to courses but coming back to what you're saying, they haven't actually gone past go. They are so frozen by too much information where at the end of the day, if you go back to it, what does your gut say? Well, it just says go left, well just go left. There is so much information out there and sometimes there is an expectation, read a thousand books a week or day or a year, and you can't get over it and at the end of the day, you got to make it happen, you got to move forward. To your point, start and then more importantly, have the habit of measuring. If we're going measuring the profit so whatever we do, just make sure you measure it. So now it's really good, look, really appreciate it, Will. Thanks for sharing your story and obviously your experience. I'm sure listeners will have a lot of gold out of that they can start implementing straight into their business and really looking forward to the next 15 years and looking forward to seeing some big things ticked off on the journey as it continues.

**Will** [00:45:10] Thanks, Matt. I'm definitely looking forward to the future and where we go from here is nothing but exciting.