**Markus Mueller Interview Transcript**

**Matt** [00:00:00] Welcome to Power Up Your Business podcast. I'm your host, Matthew Jones, owner of Cube Performance where through our Power Up coaching program, we assist tradie business owners to earn more, take home money, work less and importantly, create a great lifestyle for themselves and their family, based on all investment of blood, sweat and tears going into building a business. We want to make sure that as business owners you get a return on that. It's not about just doing the job. It's about actually building a business that can serve you and your family, delivering quality time and quality profitability. In this episode, we speak with Markus Mueller from Outdoor Solutions, based in Cairns. They are commercial landscaping business, Markus has a great story, common story starting in 2010, the business starting small, growing, a lot of growing pains through to 2020 where turning over $3 million. Busy, lots happening but unfortunately, from a personal point of view, a lot of stress, from a financial point of view, no cash, no profit. So, Markus, you'll hear Markus when he jumped on board our program and we really tried to put structure in place around creating a regular operating rhythm for himself and his team and his clients. And we really focused in on his A-class clients and started saying no to the type of work that really distracted him and didn't make any money for him and more importantly, how he really had to zero in on his focus and be great at doing the little things rather than trying to do too much. He slowed right down, less is more and was doing the little things really well, like quoting, like following up on clients, like preparing for the week and the day ahead. So really listen to how Markus has turned the business around from $3 million to actually reducing turnover to now $2 million. But more importantly, a lot more profit, a lot more quality of life, stress is reduced, and confidence in the future has increased dramatically. So again, another great story, everyone. Hope you enjoy, cheers.

[00:02:15] You're here to change your life because there's too much on the line. You're sacrificing a shit load now, and your family need to benefit. You gotta make learning a passion yourself. But the thing for me, I come to realise that. Hey. I've got to get better at business.

**Matt** [00:02:42] Hey, Marcus, good to have you on the podcast, champion, client since 2014 so good to finally have a chat and discuss your story.

**Markus** [00:02:51] Thanks, Jonesy, yes, very honoured to be here.

**Matt** [00:02:55] Well, it's good to have you on board and obviously, your story is very relatable for most tradie businesses out there. Like we're talking just before we just come online and started recording the ups and downs of business. Just give a bit of your background starting a business in 2010. So Outdoor Solutions Landscape's based in Cairns, mate, so early days how did that look?

**Markus** [00:03:19] It sort of started off, I had a career change and I wanted to get out of the office. I was in a sales role and I originally just wanted to get out of the office and go and do some outdoor work on the weekend. And I actually started off just with a residential lawn mowing run and, you know, did that as a sole trader, built that up to a bit of a garden maintenance round and had about sort of 50 clients and had a couple of staff members and, you know, did the whole thing, put a couple of guys on. You know, I then put five guys on and then all of a sudden got a rude shock. BAS, superannuation, PAYG, you know, five guys, lots of complaints from customers. They don't do the job like you used to do and you know, all of these growing pains. And so I scaled it back. And then when I started to look at, you know, scaling it back and looking at numbers and profitability on jobs, I thought, you know, this garden maintenance stuff, it's pretty, it's not bad. But if you actually want to make some decent money, there's so much competition around. And the money that you can charge for it isn't great, like, you know. So I switched over to landscaping and I'm more or less self-taught. I did, you know, I learnt from people that I worked with. I went and did a TAFE course. And just was really sort of hungry to learn and, you know, do the best I could. From there I did a cert 4 in building construction certificate with Master Builders, and that sort of really underpinned, you know, our business and where we wanted to go and that's in commercial landscape construction.

**Matt** [00:04:54] And that's where you've done a really good job at the moment to really position yourself as the expert in that space and the experts at solving commercial clients' problems and we'll talk about that in a little bit where we are now, but just coming back on that journey. So you had that transition, from the lawn mowing and then into the landscaping, into the commercial side. So year 3, year 4, year 5, year 6, year 7 and operating and as you sort of alluded to, it's a bit like it, we're busy, It should be money in the bank, but then you get hit with tax, there's no money there. And then each week it's harder to pay the boys and you're struggling to pay yourself.

**Markus** [00:05:32] Yes that was probably the huge shock. You know, in those early days when we went from, you know, just having myself and two offsiters, I've got another ute and trailer and I put on another crew and, you know, I thought, oh, this is great, you know, and then it came time to do, you know, BAS. I was doing them quarterly at the time and everything more or less tripled and profits now halved. And where was the money coming from? And I just went, wow and I was literally just putting out fires like every nearly every client was ringing up and say, oh, the guys didn't do this or they haven't done this. And yes, I just thought, oh yes, like, you know, you always say, yes, anyone with a heartbeat, here you go, here are the keys, go out, and get it done and that was exactly how I approached it, not knowing any better.

**Matt** [00:06:27] And look, that's where just framing it for everyone is listening that's what we term the classic tradie mindset, which is growing broke. In the tradie mindset, you think to get ahead financially and to make things better, you got to say yes to everyone and you grow the top line. You grow the jobs. You grow your customers. You grow your team. But growing broke means obviously from a cash perspective, cash flow and profit, it's going south while everything else is going north. But that is a common problem that tradie business owners face in the tradie mindset because they've only got one lever, they only got one understanding that like how to get ahead, just do more. And that's the worst thing you can do. And as you found and then coming up to that 2017, 2018 mate, before you jumped on board and engaged Cube Performance and jumped on the Power Up program, couple of things that we've gone through, you've noted the real problems. Obviously you are having problems with getting the right people right, hiring the right people and having that problem we call, hiring too fast. Just getting again, someone with a heartbeat just to fill a void, which causes pain. Issues with job management really managing your cost of goods, managing your materials, managing your purchase orders, getting you quotes right, getting the scope of works correct and the big thing that you're really having struggle with as well, correct, mate is that time management with that constantly feeling stress. You're just constantly on that hamster wheel spinning, spinning, spinning, spinning, doing more and more and more, but not getting ahead. And then ultimately, then that cause the financial stress and the financial pressures where just that constant, you know, worrying about the numbers. So that sort of that catalyst coming up to 2018 but yes, how is that feeling where before you reached out and knew that you needed some help, how are you feeling at the time? Again, eight years in, you've been operating for a long time. You've had a lot of war wounds at this stage.

**Markus** [00:08:24] Yes, look, I guess, you know, we'd had some pretty good successes, some really good successes, but on the other side, we had some pretty terrible losses. And, you know, you sort of get to the end of the week or the end of the month or the end of the year, and you sort of scratching your head and, you know, is this really worth it? What can I do better, especially when you've had some really good successes and, you know, those great feelings carry you through, but not consistently. And it's a bit hit and miss. And, you know, that uncertainty is a huge stressor when you know, you're quoting on jobs and you're winning jobs and you don't really know how the results are going to go. You know, you think, well, I'm going to do my best and I'm going to do a red-hot crack, but realistically, when I look back on it, we didn't really know. I was always winging it, you know, shooting from the hip. And same with the journey, like in the early days when we moved over to landscape construction. I was lucky enough to land a few really good commercial projects. But at the time, I was also doing residential. I was, you know, I was doing a bit of everything.

**Matt** [00:09:41] You do a maintenance?

**Markus** [00:09:43] Yes, we still were doing maintenance and we were doing landscape, you know, residential, commercial. And, you know, I look back on that and I just think, wow, it was just such a mess. And, you know, the big thing is when we talk about the team finding the right people, but not just finding the right people, but bringing out the best in the team, you know, everyone bringing their A-game. I think as a business owner, one of the biggest things that I've tried to do in all the work we've done is try and remove the frustration from the daily operations of the business because, you know, frustrations make work unpleasant. You know, frustrations cost your money. And, you know, it's really hard to build a culture when there just getting frustrations and those frustrations come around by, you know, not being prepared, you know, basically skimming over things, you know, shooting from the hip, so to speak.

**Matt** [00:10:43] And I think that's one of the things that you were having that problem with. I think coming back to the quoting as an example, right, you're getting people on board and giving them responsibility to the quoting. They probably weren't the right people to the quoting. You didn't have enough invested in getting the right systems in the background. You are often expecting some good results there. But it wasn't set up to succeed consistently. So that's where you get that sick feeling in the guts going, geez, I hope I've had the scope right, the pricing right, I hope of allowed for everything. I hope I got the variation right. And for you and again this is where on your journey coming on in 18 and 19 and we got some good wins on the board. You had some record years of over $3 million turnover plus, but then you found it when that like you are getting those growing pains, was it feeling good? Like we're growing more is not better. But you are struggling. And this is where, you know, we often had some pretty stern conversations, right, where Markus, we've got to get rid of this residential business. We've got to get rid of this maintenance. We've got to say no. Now, at the time just give your listeners, it's a bit like there was a bit of, I can't help you unless you're going to make this call.

**Markus** [00:12:00] Yes, I think it's really funny looking back on it, Jonesy, because I think when I first came to the Cube and started working with you and stuff, like you said, look, I've heard all these excuses before. Everyone says my business is different. We do things this way. And you know, and you were like really adamant. You've just got to drop all the excuses and buy into this. And I think probably that was the biggest hurdle at the start. You know, when you're in a coaching session, you can say to a coach, oh yes, yes, yes, yes, and agree with it, but if you don't go away and follow through and do the work, you're not really getting the value out of the processes. And I think I was very guilty of that. Like I was like, you know, super keen like, yes, yes, yes but then you know, it was going away and my mind was just, you know, spread too thin. And I didn't have the focus. I didn't you know, I was still hanging on to some excuses or some old habits, and I just wasn't applying myself 100% to the system and the process and the lessons that were to be learned. As a result, the results were intermittent. And I think that's the biggest thing and, you know, you've got this saying, we've got this saying in the community about having an inch wide, mile deep focus as opposed to a mile wide, an inch deep. And I was certainly a person that had a mile wide, inch deep focus. I was just, you know, looking at all these different things and wanting to try out, implement all these things and had all these great ideas. But I wasn't actually applying myself and being focused and doing the actual hard work to get it right. I was just skimming the surface on things and, and then getting frustrated because it wasn't working. And that frustration carries onto the team. The team's getting frustrated when the team's frustrated, you know, we're, you know, not delivering on our promise. We're not doing, you know, getting the job done right. And you know, you get turnover because people are unhappy because, you know, yes, work is stressful. So, you know, being able to turn things around and seeing from the other members of the community that have done really well and learning from their journey and asking them, hey, what's been your secret? And, you know, hearing other guys say, well, let's just do the work, put the work in. We always talk about focus on the community calls, so it's being focused and doing the work and you know, that's really good. The other thing that's been really good, Jonesy, is, you know, that regular rhythm that you talk about, the success habits, the rocks that you need in your calendar, the things that are non-negotiable, just have to be done. And setting up a regular rhythm as a business owner, not, you know, for myself, but also a regular rhythm for my team. So everyone sort of understands, yes, this is how we roll. This is the regular rhythm of things. So you're just getting the really important tasks, the success habits that are key to getting the results. You're doing those relentlessly, you know, get focused on them and you're not just making excuses, you're not doing them half arsed, you just focus on and doing them in a regular rhythm. And that's a huge relief just knowing like on the weekend, I know what my week is going to look like, you know, I'm on Monday this is the success habit I'm going to do. Tuesdays, Thursdays if things change or whatever, I don't stress too much because I know that, okay, something might have popped up, but that's cool, I'm still going to do that. I'm going to make sure I need to get that task done because that's going to ensure that my business is running smoothly.

**Matt** [00:15:57] Yes, and you've done really well there and that's been the catalyst for this last 12 months change, which has been a massive turnaround, staying to that rhythm and that's about discipline. It's about again, that each wide mile deep focus because I just want to go back for that and touch on that, especially for the listeners so they understand is that, you know, you're in that, you know, mile wide and stay focused, like you said, you're scratching the surface. You'd be looking at new jobs, the jobs management system. You'd be looking at a HR system. You would look in a safety system. You're be looking at team members. You'd be looking at a HR manager. You're looking at, let's just do marketing for residential construction. Let's do maintenance. And by the way, our core let's do a little bit on our core, you know, commercial landscaping. It was ridiculous. And so some of the sessions that we had, you know, point blank, you come up with excuses, why didn't you do X? Oh, Jonesy, you know, this is like why I can't help you. But again, you were just so distracted. And again, there was that lack of implementation. And as you know, we always say it's pretty simple. Just do it. Don't think. Just do it. Just do our process. Implement it. Be great at doing it. When you're great at doing the little things really well, the big results follow and that's and it's great and leaning into our community, Jason Hobson, Matt Lowlett and Peter Hill and yes, Malcolm and Kylie Van de Graaf, You know, I mean they do it well and that's the great thing about the community. It is just like success leaves clues as we always say, you don't have to reinvent the wheel or reinvent the Bible, as you say.

**Markus** [00:17:35] Yes, just do it, I think the really important thing, you know, that I'd like your listeners to know as well, Jonesy, is that, you know, in 2020 I was very distracted and I wasn't putting in the work and I came to you and I just said, look, you know, I need to have a break because I'm not getting value out of the program because I'm not doing the work, because I'm not doing the work. I'm not seeing the results. And so I had a break for, you know, six or 12 months, whatever it was. And through that time, you were, you know, really patient. You kept me sort of had access to the program and I could still see what was going on. And I was kind of like out there free floating for a while. And then I think I came back to you at the end of 2020 and went, Jonesy, mate, I need help. And that was the moment where I went, okay, right now I'm going to put my head down. Now I understand. No more excuses. And you know, from there it's just been, you know, every post has been a winner, basically.

**Matt** [00:18:35] Look, as you know, from our point of view, we just want to help you and help everyone out there succeed. People are putting a lot on the line. They're investing a lot. They're sacrificing a lot, you know, sacrificing time away from family, sacrificing other things they could be doing. So we want you to succeed. And from our point of view, you've got to be ready. And that's why we give people space, because you got to be ready. We don't want to waste our time. You don't want to waste your time because you get frustrated and you know that I get bloody frustrated, frustrates the shit out of me when I see someone that's on the cusp of doing well. But they procrastinate and they sit on their hands. They don't want to get out of their comfort zone and ultimately just have a goddamn crack at this. Let's have a crack at it really well, and stop those excuses. Stop, I'm different but, Jonesy, I'm different. I don't really take to that too well, do I, when I hear that.

**Markus** [00:19:28] And I think the really big thing, like you talk about leaning into it and, you know, doing the work and applying yourself, the community calls that we have every Tuesday night. Previously in the past I was, yes, I hadn't really committed to those. I was on a few, you know, I made a commitment. This is part of the program. This is just as important as everything else in the program. So I made a commitment to make sure I'm there every Tuesday night, you know, be involved, participate, listen, and learning from the other guys, hearing their success stories or what hasn't worked has been really, really important because you can see, like it's great when you see other guys in the community that are getting the great results from doing the work. It's really inspiring and for me personally, that's been a huge benefit to sort of be involved in those calls and have that feedback from everyone.

**Matt** [00:20:25] You've been great again, especially over the last 12, 18 months, really getting into the community and being a valuable member of the community, contributing. As you know, with our community, it's about sharing where there's no competition here. We got an abundance mentality where it's just like, if I'm doing something well, share it with the crew. Likewise, you know, because I'll share it with you. Agree? And that's a great thing about having a likeminded community of business owners, entrepreneurs, business performance, people who want to who want the betterment for the whole industry and the whole community. And that's exciting thing that we're building. And that's a great thing having, you know, yourself and the rest of the crew on board, which is what we're really proud of. And in the back of that and really so in that last 12, 18 months, which has been so great, just seeing your transformation, a couple of the key things I just want to touch on the importance of the Way We Do It Here. The importance of you crystallising your vision in terms of that, what you know, where you want to be in an aspirational vision, the importance of the promise, what you deliver to your customers every time you show up, and then the importance of the values, which is essentially the choices that your team have to make every day. And in rolling it back, if your team makes those choices, they're aligned to the values they will deliver on the promise to the client. And then more times we deliver on that promise to our client, we will achieve our big vision. Now, framing that, that took a while, didn't it, to really get you to buy into the Way We Do It Here, to really understand the power of the Way We Do It Here, so many people go, yes, look, I got the document here and I've rolled it out and it's not working. I don't know what's going on. It doesn't work. Just explain how important it is for you to really understand it, for you to really buy it. And then the power of that now, going forward, we have a small team, a lot smaller team than you've had previously, but the output is far greater.

**Markus** [00:22:21] Yes, look, I think that's probably one of the most difficult parts. Like you said, it's probably the most important part of the process. It's also one of the most difficult because you've got to really think about your business and what it means. You know, I think when we started, we had some really long winded promises and visions and values.

**Matt** [00:22:47] If I can just say one thing I think, it was full of fluff.

**Markus** [00:22:50] It was full of fluff. And I think the most you know, I always remember you saying that you should be able to ask any team member on any given day, what's our promise? What are our values? And they should be able to come back and spit them out. So had to be really simple. Get rid of all the fluff. And yes, it's taken a lot of hard work to come up with that. And it's a revision as well. So like every 12 months you sort of look at it like, alright, is this relevant? What does that mean? The other big thing is once we sort of we have a solid sort of set of values and a solid promise talking about that amongst the team and you know, really incorporating that, threading that into the daily activities of the business and daily conversations, which I found very difficult to start with. And you've been great in coaching me to help to own that and it's like anything you just get better at it the more you do it, talking about the value and you know, the choice and the behaviour. And I found it really difficult but having that authenticity and vulnerability that we speak about, I just said to the team, look guys, I'll be really honest, this is not easy for me, but I need to do this. I need to be saying these things. So they sort of knew and then as it was happening, like week in, week out, now it's just coming naturally where you're reinforcing those values and aligning it back to choices and behaviours of each team member.

**Matt** [00:24:25] Yes, and you're doing that really well now as we talk, it's about sharing the story and it's connecting stories with the values so that people can understand because it brings in different concepts, different perceptions, different backgrounds, different environments that people are brought up on and they're bringing to the table and that connects them. And it's like their aha moment, okay, I really get it now that's why stories are so important that's why when you have meetings, it's not just one way, this is for people who are listening when you're having a meeting, it's just try and think about having letting other people talk more. You've got two ears and one mouth, as we say, speak half as much as you're listening. So allow your team members to start telling the story. Give them confidence. Then they'll really understand, okay, these are the choices that I'm going to make. Well, if I make more of these choices that are aligned to our habits, I will get more pats on the back. Hey, our clients are happier. And more importantly, as you know, it's about creating that framework that everyone feels safe in because everyone believes in the Way We Do It Here. And as you know, over the years, man, you've had to get rid of people that you thought were, you know, fitting into the Way We Do It Here or believing it, but they didn't believe in it. So it's like, see you later. And you've done really well there with that and that's giving you that, like you said, that springboard today as we talk about the art of the conversation, you can then have good conversations now around that to your A-class clients. You can comfortably sit in front of a commercial landscaping client and say, this is the way we do it here. This is how, I am the expert at solving our problems because of and you know that you're confident that your team's going to deliver on that now. How is that different having the confidence in that now place you moving forward?

**Markus** [00:26:09] 100% overall being a lot more relaxed and confident because I've got clarity and in, you know, the numbers and you know all the processes we've got the right team. We have communicated. We're delivering on our promise, the values. You know, it's a happy workplace so that just breeds confidence. And your clients and the people you work with can tell. They pick up on that and it gives them confidence. And then that's why they want to do business with you, because, you know, they're confident that you're going to deliver that was a huge thing as well. Getting over that hurdle or that mindset that, you know, we're in commercial. It's really competitive. Margins are tight in commercial that took me ages to get over that hurdle. And then, you know, one day the penny finally dropped and I went, oh, you can go broke sitting at home. So what's the point of even doing that, doing the job if the margins aren't right, if the profits are not built into the job and you know the client, it's about giving them confidence that we are the experts. We are going to deliver your project hassle-free. You know, we might be a little bit dearer, but we're thorough. You know, we're going to get the job done on time, on budget, hassle-free. We're your industry experts and I've had feedback from clients where that's exactly what they've said. You might be a little bit dearer, but you know all of those things. You tick all these boxes. And now we only work with a handful of select clients and a lot of it's just repeat business from these, you know, a select few builders and clients. And it's just that relationship, their staff know our staff. We know exactly what we're going to do. And if there's ever anything that needs to be discussed or addressed, it's always done in a good manner and sorted out straight away. And it's just happy days because, like I said, all the frustration has been taken out of the operations of the business. So we're all calm and we're all, you know, we've all got clarity around what needs to happen, what our roles are, and that brings some confidence.

**Matt** [00:28:24] And that comes back to that period, really focusing on, okay, who is that A-class client? Who are they? What are they in terms of have got to respect us. They believe in the value that we deliver. Our values are aligned as well, which is really important, you know, So, you know, if we've got respect, they've got to have respect, honesty, integrity. You've really aligned with the right type of client. So ultimately, as you alluded to, it's not about the price. They've got peace of mind knowing that, yes, Markus and your team will deliver value and remove my headaches. It's not about price at the end of the day because you've gone above and beyond to really educate them. You know, we talk about educating your A-class clients why you are more expensive, the value that you deliver. And then once you get that real radar and zero in on that A-class client and you know that these are profitable clients, it's a lot easier to say no to everyone else. But when you don't know your numbers, it's like you said, you're not really sure your position, not sure on the Way We Do It Here, then that's when I'll just say yes to this client. And that's where the frustration sets in that's when your team gets the shits because they're going to get and pulled and pulled and pushed to job to job in different jobs, things aren't ready, but now same type of client. So in other words, our quoting system is the same. It's consistent the way we do purchase orders. The way we do claims, the way our team set up work health safety. It's all consistent and more importantly, your team is happy because they know they're working with clients that actually value what we're doing. They actually respect us and that's a big thing. Rocking on the site, knowing that I'm ready to put in a good day's work. And you know what, I'm stoked to be here. I'm happy to put in a good day's work because I'm respected for doing this.

**Markus** [00:30:10] Yes and that's the other thing too Jonesy, like with even with our quoting and expression of interest documents, I've put a lot more detail and a lot more thought into how I present them and, you know, making sure that I'm letting the client, educating the client know, educating the client that we are across this, we've covered off on the scope of work. So this is exactly what we've allowed for making it really simple and easy for them to understand our quoting and our pricing. And then so when they look at it, it's all there for them. And then you know that the art of the conversation, like you always talk about, ringing up and talking about the programme, the scope, you know, letting them know what our processes are, letting them know that we want to, you know, be prepared and deliver a great project for them. So building that conversation, which builds up rapport with the clients so that it's not the price, and if there is a price issue, there's a conversation around the price and it might be a certain element of the scope or, you know, and it's a negotiation and I can then have a look at the job. And because I've structured my quotes and I've got the bill of quantities right and the margins right, I'm really confident in the way I quoted the job, I can then make an informed decision whether, you know, there's a bit of room to move, you know, whether I can meet them halfway or whether I just say, no, this is it. This is what it is. I'm sorry, I don't but it's nice when you have that relationship with the clients and you're having those conversations, you're having that feedback and you've got the choice, then you know, do I want to sharpen my pencil a little bit or do I need to just stick to my guns? And I think that's great, it's nice having that luxury with clients.

**Matt** [00:32:00] Well, that's it and you can do that when you've got because you're putting the detail in the scope, You can then change the scope or the quotes got the details in there so you can pick the piece apart. You don't just drop it aside. We can totally drop the overall project price, but we are going to have to remove elements of the scope.

**Markus** [00:32:17] Exactly.

**Matt** [00:32:17] And again because you're building up the confidence with those clients, they respect you, you know, they've got confidence in your skill and expertise. And this is where I want listeners to really take note here. And this is where we talk about inch wide mile deep is that you go through a lot of detail and invest a lot of time in the initial stages from a quote, when you get a lead, through to a prospect, through to prospect, through to trying to convert the job. You're investing a lot of time to ensure that you've got the right detail, the scope, the team are ready to go. You're educating the client. A lot of people and the listeners out there, they probably think, oh, that's great, but I haven't got time for that. Well, I'm just going to say, if you haven't got time for that, you shouldn't be doing these jobs. And this is where it comes back to you've now got the time because you've been saying no to all the other distractions. Now, back in the day, you couldn't go to this level of detail and be great at this. I'm talking about being great from a lead to converting. You got to be great in this day and age, if you want to make money. You're now great. Back in the day you are ordinary because again, maintenance issues. I've got this. I'm trying to be residential. I've got this shiny object that's not working. And again, the old classic, mile wide inch deep, you just scratch the surface on it.

**Markus** [00:33:36] I remember we had a really good conversation, one day you asked me, did you do this? Did you do that? Have you done this? Have you done that? And I was like, no, no, no, no. And you're like, well, can you honestly say that you brought your A-game to the table? And I was like, no, not probably. It's probably my C-game. And like you said, you've got to be great, it's bring your A-game, be great at it or don't bother.

**Matt** [00:34:03] Don't bother and this is where so many people are wasting their time. This is why so many people and as you know that sort of approach ask for help and they say, I want to do this and I want to do that. But then if they're not prepared to change and not appear prepared to say no, but more importantly, they're not prepared to be great at it, we can't help them. And that's, again, a credit to you, mate, to really having this great transformation and again, getting the detail and everything that you're doing, removing the distractions again, those shiny objects that we talk about that you were a classic. You're like a cat, man. Every little shiny object you are jumping at it is like, I'm doing this every session would do. You'd say, I've got a new project now. I've got something new and a new shiny object. And I would just be sitting there shaking my head, just going, what are you doing, man?

**Markus** [00:34:47] You know, like, really important things. It's like we said no to residential clients because straight off the bat the residential clients, first of all, quoting, the amount of phone calls that come in, can you do this little retaining wall, little bit of paving, blah, blah, blah. The amount of time that was zapping out of my week of having to drive out, meet these people, scope the job out that was just huge. So I don't do that anymore. It's great. I've got another contractor who I refer all my work to and I always sort of think I do it in a really nice way. And I always sort of think you poor fellow having to deal with all this, but he's happy to do it that's where he's at and that's fine. But that's just saved me so much time. Now we're not having to go and do these little residential jobs. We're focusing on being great at the commercial work.

**Matt** [00:35:40] Rather than being average.

**Markus** [00:35:42] Yes.

**Matt** [00:35:43] Because that's the thing though, your sweet spot is commercial. The person that you're referring to the work to, their sweet spot should be residential. Well the person that you're referring maintenance that's their sweet spot. They don't want to do commercial because there's something that was, I think the last thing I want to do with bloody commercial. It's too hard work health safety and the margins or whatever. It's not a sweet spot. Don't even go there. Don't even try and fill a gap in trying to do some work in there because it's going to be pain, it's going to be painful. And that's that difference now where you know, you've got that sweet spot where you know it and this is what we say, if you do get a referral, be professional. Say, I no longer do maintenance. But I've got an expert in the maintenance game or the residential game, here's their number now they will leave you and think, well, thanks, Markus, for being so honest. As opposed to what you've done and what a lot of people do is what you've done the past is, yes, okay, you send through the information, and I'll send you a quote. You never get back to it. Like, you know, in the back of your mind, you're never going to get back the quote so you leave a bad taste in that person's mouth.

**Markus** [00:36:54] Absolutely, yes.

**Matt** [00:36:56] Because you think you try to do the right thing by going, oh, look, I'll try and help you out. The worst thing you can do is give me the quote and I'll try and get to it. You never get to it, say then in there, I'm not an expert at this. Frank is the expert, and there's a number. Good luck. Wow, Markus is so good.

**Markus** [00:37:12] I've got so much more time to do all my success habits, all the important things. I've got so much more time, and I'm just more relaxed and enjoying it a lot more.

**Matt** [00:37:23] Well, I think that this is the thing now because of that rhythm and we talk about, as you know, and from a number's point of view so I'll just touch on the numbers first. So again, what we're looking at this year, you know, from a turnover point of view, you know, I think we've actually reduced from where we were in, say 2020 to where we are now, we reduced turnover by about 40%. So we're going to be pushing towards about a $2 million turnover this year so still nice and healthy. But as you know, the big thing is we're going to be pushing towards a 12%, 13%, 15% operating profit after you've drawn a wage paid superannuation and everything like that, as opposed to making a loss so that less is more, less turnover, more profit, less jobs, more productivity, less team, more engagement, more empowerment. So the massive improvement is great on the numbers point of view. But now I want to tap into too, because as you know, from our point of view on the program, it's not just about the numbers, it's not about the business, it's a holistic view of the individual. Success habits, you can't just have success habits in business and then not have them in your personal life. There's got to be a crossover. And the great thing that you've noted, you know, previously, your stress levels were up around nine or ten that's now dropped down to three or four. So it's a massive drop. And the big thing to all along aligned with that, your confidence was down around, you know, to two or three, you know, really low. It's now eight or nine. So just from that personal point of view and that confidence in slowing things down and having time, yeah. How much positive impact has had that on your personal life now and just and that contentment, you know, moving forward that you know what, I am in control and I have got working towards a good balance. As we know things always happen floating out and that can be you can get, life can hit you in the face. But now you're feeling you're a lot more resilient to what's thrown at you.

**Markus** [00:39:20] Yes, absolutely, it goes back to having those, hit those rocks in the calendar, those non-negotiables. And, you know, one of the rocks is your self-care, your time to look after your own health and wellbeing, you know, whether it be exercise, spending time with friends and family, recreational pursuits or whatever. You need to have that time for yourself to ensure you can be the best leader and best business owner you can. So by having the success habits and the rocks in there and the rhythm and being disciplined and sticking to it, it means that, okay, I'm not working till 5, 6, 7PM, I'm trying to get out of here at 3:00 or 4:00 each day, just like the guys are trying to finish at 3:00 or 4:00 each day. And so I go home in the afternoon and you've got a few hours there to do whatever you need to do. And by prioritising that time in the business to do what the tasks are, but also personally as well, it creates that good balance for yourself. We talked about frustration and removing frustration by reducing our turnover, as such, we're not working constantly like push and push and push and there's a degree of comfortable sort of comfortable-ness in the schedule. We're doing great. We're making money, but we're not sort of rushing from one job to the next, and we're getting home at 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon and having that great balance of lifestyle. So if the guys were back to 5:00 or 6:00, it's usually because they've, you know, failed to prepare or forgotten something. And I'm able to put that back on to them and say, well, look, guys, did that align with this value that choice and behaviour? The reason why you are stuck doing this is because you didn't bring, you know, bring your A-game on this particular day.

**Matt** [00:41:16] And in that planning, that preparation and it starts with you alluded to it before and this is what I want everyone to sort of take heed. If you're struggling in time management, be great on a Friday, be great on that Friday afternoon, plan the week ahead. Call the clients to make sure that's ready to go. Don't assume the job's ready to go. Call the suppliers, call any subcontractors, lock in the week like you mentioned before, so you can have a nice weekend and then you roll into Monday and you're pumped and you're ready to go. So it is about being greater that planning and preparation. And as you mentioned, the key thing is from a less is more point of view. You know, you could be spending 12, 10 hours a day working, working, busy, busy, busy, oh Jonesy, I'm busy but a lot of the time, it's been reactive. So what we want work less but when you're working 8 hours, you're getting 8 hours productivity, as opposed to maybe working 8 hours and only getting 4 hours productivity or working 12 hours and only getting 4 hours productivity that's what most people are doing. And then therefore, that time encroaches on your personal space. You come home, you're grumpy, then you're not sharpening your personal saw, whether it be reading a book or, as you mentioned, going for walking or going to the gym. So then you roll in the next day. And it just becomes that cycle because you've got to be great as a business owner. You've got to be great on the personal side of things, you can't be dull. You've got to be sharp with your decision-making, sharp with your choices, sharp with your intent in everything you do, and obviously sharp with your focus. And that's where people say, oh, look, I'm working or I'm already working 80 hours a week. How can I invest another half a day on planning and preparation? I say invest that half, invest 4 hours of planning and preparation for the preceding for the upcoming week, you'll knock off 20 hours of ridiculous goddamn wasted work or reactive time and that's a great thing. You've really bought into that now and it's part of that weekly rhythm, monthly rhythm.

**Markus** [00:43:15] And consistency is the key to everything. And you know, having that consistent rhythm, the consistent delivery, the consistent staff, the consistent method of quoting, the clients know what to expect, the suppliers know what to expect, the staff know what to expect. It's a consistent delivery of service on all levels. And it breeds that confidence and everyone knows that it's peace of mind that Outdoor Solutions are going to deliver and at this consistent level across the board and I think that's the key to success really.

**Matt** [00:43:50] And I love that and you're definitely spot on, it is that consistency and I like what you say there, consistency at all levels. So in other words, you're consistent with how you plan the week, you're consistent with your planning, preparation, how you call clients, how you educate clients, when you go to quote, how you start a job, how you finish your job, how you do team meetings, everything is consistent and that's what people want. Good people, good clients just want consistency, just be consistent and that's where it comes back to, is doing the little things really well and having that dedication there and that discipline. So it's great, mate, it's really been exciting again these last 12 months and the future is looking very promising. And one of the key things, again, one of the I just want to touch on because I want to get your sort of final takeaway and what you sort of recommend for business owners out there and how to improve so they can earn more, work less and create a great life. But again, just touching on one of the things that you mentioned is the key for us is trust the process. Trust our process, trust the methodology and ditch the excuses. So I love that and I think everyone we can all make excuses, but you got to be honest with yourself, if you're not liking the environment that you're living in right now, you've created it. So ditch your excuses and get disciplined and get focused. So yes, really awesome brother but so what do you reckon? What would you recommend for any other tradie out there that's potentially struggling being where you've been before? What's a bit of a key takeaway or words of wisdom that you can impart?

**Markus** [00:45:27] I guess, you know, it's got to come from within to start with. It has to be a driver personally that for some reason you want to change and make an improvement to your business and your life. You know, that's got to be the most important thing. And once you make that decision, then to, you know, seek out the help and make yourself vulnerable and apply yourself, you know, and I think that's the beauty of the Cube Performance coaching platform is that you show us the way to do it. You show us what the success habits are. You coach us on being great at doing them and all we need to do is drop the excuses, apply ourselves, participate, become involved and get better. And I think that's the beauty of it. So again, like for any business owners out there that want to make a change, seek out the help, but then apply yourself to the process and drop the excuses.

**Matt** [00:46:32] You know, I like that and I like one of the things you mentioned there is to move ahead. You've got to be vulnerable, right, to make change. You've got to be vulnerable because that opens you up to all wounds or potentially all the things that you've done wrong previously. But you got to be vulnerable, especially for your team and everyone going forward so that people understand you and that means you're willing to change. And again, from that personal level but you know I appreciate that mate, I think on that too with everyone in any shape of life or whatever sporting endeavour you're doing or academic, be in a likeminded group. You need that good, strong community that, you know, success leaves clues that people have been there before you jump on board. Be surrounded by likeminded people that is key for success that's definitely one of the key things that I've experienced in my life that's for sure.

**Markus** [00:47:23] Absolutely and I love hearing from other business owners in the community on the journey that they've been, especially like within the Cube. There are so many other guys in the group now, guys and girls in the group that have their journey. They've had success. They've gone away from the process. They've had to recalibrate, refocus. It's great like and it doesn't all just click in at once. You've got to be really patient. At the start it can seem very overwhelming but you've just got to narrow down your focus, concentrate on doing the little things, be great at them, trust the process. And by listening to other members in the group and hearing their journey, it gives you confidence and faith that, look, this actually does work and it's not easy, but other people have done it and got the results. So before I do, I'll get the results as well.

**Matt** [00:48:21] Been on that journey with that likeminded group that helps you in the journey of the ups and downs that's good, mate, well, thanks for jumping on this podcast, Markus, great to have you.

**Markus** [00:48:32] Yes, thanks, Jonesy.

**Matt** [00:48:33] And just finishing off obviously being a Rabbitohs fan, so go Rabbitohs in 2023, mate.

**Markus** [00:48:38] Mate, we're looking good this year, so yes, feeling confident.

**Matt** [00:48:43] As long as we beat those Roosters.

[00:48:48] You're here to change your life. Because there's too much on the line. You're sacrificing shit loads now, and your family need to benefit. You got to make learning a passion for yourself. The thing for me, I come to realise it. I've got to get better at business.