

Coach teaching from experience

Former farm girl guides others after climbing ladder

DEBBIE Riddiford prefers to think of herself as a friend rather than a business coach.

She has just taken up a position with 10X, a business coaching company that launched on the Sunshine Coast late last year.

She left her position as a senior accountant at the Accura Group in Nambour to further her passion to help businesses improve and grow.

"I was very happy where I was but the opportunity was presented to me and when I saw what they offered I was blown away," she said.

"I grew up on a farm. My father had a building and construction business and my uncle was a cabinet maker. I started out in banking, then went into sales, trouble shooting consulting, human resources and I was second in charge for a large public company in Gladstone responsible for 450 employees.

"So, I haven't just heard about what can happen to businesses, I have experienced a lot of it.

"I think if you've got the coaching, it's a lot easier because you have people to talk to and support you.

"My clients in the past have been able to talk to me about all issues, not just accounting or cash flow. It's going that step further.

"You're a friend to them and you are someone they can talk to."

The local branch will be holding an Edge Event for local businesses at the Hyatt Cooloom on March 9.

In the meantime, here are Ms Riddiford's best New Year's resolutions for business owners.



FRIENDLY COACH: Debbie Riddiford. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

1. Leverage your time – Business owners need to prioritise their time to work on their business, rather than in it, to focus on achieving their big-picture goals. Debbie suggested delegating tasks, giving more responsibility to employees and implementing efficient systems.

2. Look after your lifetime customers – "Your most loyal customers are your most profitable. They spend more each time and they purchase more regularly," Debbie says. "Do whatever you can to create and maintain these long-term relationships."

3. Make marketing a priority – Spending money to market to customers is the best way to boost your revenue, and the only way to let them know that you exist. Creative, cost-effective ways of marketing are becoming increasingly accessible.

4. Take advantage of social media – "Using social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and blogs can be a virtually free way of positioning yourself

as the expert," Debbie said.

5. Manage your cash flow – 92% of business owners frequently stress about cash flow, but this doesn't have to be the case. There are countless methods of ensuring you are never short on cash.

6. Spend time on your self-education – The business environment is evolving so rapidly that it's hard to be an expert in every area of business. Debbie suggested reading, attending seminars and workshops. "A business will never outperform its leadership," she said.

7. Empower your team – "Business owners are responsible for creating a company culture where employees are encouraged to go above and beyond their duties to create a fantastic customer experience."

8. Ask for help – It often takes an outsider to see your business objectively and to know what needs to be done. A business coach or mentor can help you identify and achieve your goals, and build accountability.

9. Cut your losses – It is vitally important that you test and measure the effectiveness of certain management policies, marketing strategies and working styles.

"If something you've always done isn't working, drop it," Debbie said.

10. Make time for yourself – In line with the recent debate surrounding the work/life balance, she said the key to achieving this resolution is to make it specific.

She urged people to aim to spend 10 nights a month with their family.