

Gympie pool business making a splash

Take your typical blistering Queensland summer, add a quality designed and constructed pool from Gympie's Poolscene, blend with great service, proactive owners and a switched on accountant - and you've got a ready-made formula for small business success. (And a pool party!)

Ross and Melissa Morley's Poolscene (formerly Gold Town Pools) is going swimmingly, and their success is testament to their vision for the business and readiness to tap into expert advice to help them make smart decisions.

After spending the past 5 years installing pools and working in partnership with Ross's parents, the couple took over operations on 1st October this year, and they haven't looked back.

From above ground to in-ground, fibre glass to concrete, backed up by a range of support services including cool water testing, Poolscene has established itself as Gympie's one-stop pool shop.

But running the business hasn't been without its challenges.

Sink or swim

Winter 2008 was financially tough for the Morleys so earlier this year they re-thought the whole *swimming pool idea*.

"In the summer months we are extremely busy - everyone wants a pool installed before Christmas, but in winter it is extremely slow," said Melissa.

"The economic downturn hasn't had too much impact on our business. It's more the weather extremes of regional Queensland that have posed special challenges for pool construction." Instead of cutting costs they thought about the bigger picture. Above and around anyone's swimming pool is a living environment. It's a place where families look to spend quality time relaxing in a tranquil setting.

Melissa said that when they decided not to limit themselves to just thinking 'pools', they hit on an idea that has taken their business ahead in leaps and bounds.

"Purchasing a Garden Centre to complement our existing pool services made perfect sense. Every time a recession hits, investments around

the home increase so we decided to capitalise on this and help stimulate our cashflow during the slower months," she said.

Melissa is the first to admit that having expert business advisors behind them was instrumental in helping the pair make the right choices.

A real life saver

"Charter Partners have been a genuine partner in our business success, working with us every step of the way," said Melissa.

"With their help we've taken the plunge and grown from being a husband and wife partnership to employing two full-time staff members and owning a shop."

Ross and Melissa have taken advantage of Charter Partners Quarterly Meetings and Business Planning meetings and now find they are better equipped to make more informed business decisions.

"We value the unbiased advice we receive from those meetings. They take the time to understand our circumstances and have helped make improvements to many aspects of our business, not just the bottom line", said Melissa.

"Our bookwork is also a lot more thorough and professional thanks to Charter Partners Quickbooks accounting software, and I can now easily manage transactions and save time on key tasks like invoicing."

The couple cite having accountants who are always happy to answer their questions, no matter how trivial, and who speak to them in plain English as a big plus too.

"We look on Charter Partners as a lot more than our accountants - they are a valuable extension to our business."

Poolscene is located at 50 Monkland St, Gympie. Phone (07) 5482 7066

BRIGHT IDEAS



How QUARTERLY MEETINGS can make a big difference

A lot can happen in 3 months and if you are not on top of it things can get away from you. Debtors can get out of control, profit can slip and cashflow can dry up.

We like to meet with clients every quarter to check on progress to date. It gives you an **up-to-the-minute, accurate snapshot** of how your business is doing, and makes it easier to rectify any issues or problems before they become costly mistakes.

Quarterly meetings give you peace of mind not to mention the reassurance that business is on track and in good shape to achieve your goals. Call us today to talk about our **Quarterly meeting fixed price packages**.

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with
Anthony McPhee

Being proactive makes a difference

The current economic climate might suggest that things are improving. If property is a gauge then improvements in property prices, especially in Sydney and Melbourne, may suggest we have turned a corner. So too would current share prices with Commonwealth bank shares pushing past \$50.

Things may be looking up but rather than get carried away by the first green shoots of improvement I still think there is a lot more hard work needed to be done by governments, corporates and businesses as a whole to rectify economic wrongs of a number of years. I take a more pragmatic approach and suggest all my clients do the same when considering the future and their finances.

It's important to stay focused and not get caught up in the hype or hysteria of any market – good business fundamentals will find their reward by providing consistent ongoing profits and cashflow. I therefore recommend that all businesses:

1. Create a cashflow forecast - It is a critical diagnostic tool for your business
2. Ensure timely and accurate financial reports are prepared –this is the best way to identify emerging problems and provide management with the best tools to rectify them
3. Communicate with debtors - This helps activate slow payers and identify problems
4. Check new customer credentials - Credit assessments can eliminate potential risks
5. Be disciplined - Let unresponsive debtors know you will not tolerate exceeding agreed terms
6. Review short-term business plans - Ensure projections are sustainable and based on realistic assumptions
7. Communicate with staff and major stakeholders - This assists in avoiding

damaging gossip and ill-informed whispers

8. Be innovative - Left field thinking in such times can more often than not aid a business in battling markets
9. Be open to change - Being flexible and willing to embrace change can be critical to the survival of the business
10. Be proactive rather than reactive

It's imperative businesses have accurate, up to date and realistic forecasts of their sales, purchases, overheads, gross margins, net profit and cashflow in order to make good management decisions. Critical decisions about the future of the business, such as levels of employment investment, salaries, sales, stock levels, debtors and creditors, and overdraft requirements should be soundly based on up to date financial information, not just based on gut feel and instinct. This will instil confidence in other key stakeholders such as your bank.

I cannot stress enough the importance of communicating with advisors when matters of concern arise. Being proactive and on the front foot in difficult times enable solutions to be considered and strategies worked through so outcomes favourable to all major stakeholders involved are reached. There may not always be a simple solution however communication with stakeholders can never be underestimated. Often the stakeholders in a business have similar pressures, and by communicating and understanding those pressures, workable solutions with favourable outcomes can be achieved.

Business operators will all need to implement some forms of change to deal with the current economic climate. Charter Partners can assist operators to be proactive in making assessments and implementing those changes.

TAX NEWS

Claiming the Tax Break on laptops

The following advice from the ATO about laptops will be relevant to any small business (a business with a turnover of less than \$2 million) looking to acquire a laptop before 31 December 2009, or any business which did in fact acquire a laptop between 13 December 2008 and 30 June 2009.

Small businesses can still take advantage of the Tax Break (the bonus 50% deduction) in relation to most depreciating assets acquired by 31 December 2009 which cost at least \$1,000.

To claim the Tax Break, the relevant asset must have been acquired for the principal purpose of carrying on a business.

The ATO will accept that a laptop computer will be used for the principal purpose of carrying on a business if, when the taxpayer first acquires and then uses the laptop computer, it is reasonable to conclude that they will use it for more than 50% of the time for the purpose of carrying on a business.

Employee Share Schemes

The Government has confirmed the final changes to the taxation of employee share schemes, which will apply to all shares and rights acquired on or after 1 July 2009, not 13 May 2009.

Modifications to their Budget proposal include:

- Increasing the income tax threshold for eligibility for the upfront tax concessions to \$180,000 (this was initially \$60,000);
- Providing further clarity on the meaning of “real risk of forfeiture” (if there is a “real risk”, employees will not be able to pay tax upfront); and
- Allowing the deferral of tax in relation to up to \$5,000 worth of shares under certain salary sacrifice based schemes.

Do you have a clear vision for your business?

Peak performance is not an accident. It's the result of a powerful vision and workable plan put into action over a period of time. In today's pressurised world it's easy to get caught up in the challenges of day-to-day business survival and lose sight of where you're heading, let alone work out the best way to get there.



With the help of Charter Partners **Business Optimiser program**, you don't have to get there by yourself. You'll have an expert business advisor by your side to ensure you regain focus and momentum and get back in step with your business goals.

Charter Partners **4-step Business Optimiser program** is the ultimate way to:

- Benchmark the health of your business
- Boost your business to its full potential
- Benefit your bottom line
- Build business vitality

A new way of driving profitable growth

In four productive steps the Business Optimiser program makes peak performance possible.

It's a top-to-bottom evaluation of your business that identifies opportunities for growth and increased profits, develops a strategy to capitalise on those opportunities, and creates a step-by-step guide to keep you on a clear path to sustainable success.

Step 1: Business Health Check

Vital signs for peak performance

How healthy is your business? And what improvements or changes could you implement right now to boost your results? The Business Health Check objectively reviews every aspect of your business to assess its overall fitness, pinpoint weaknesses, focus its potential and identify measurable goals to have it running at peak performance.

Result

A better understanding of your current business position, plus a detailed report and score card with instructions on how to improve profitability.

Step 2: Strategic Planning

Charting a path to success

Your journey to success has to start with a clear vision for where you want to go with your business and what it should look like when you get there. Together we'll create that vision, develop a strategy to support it and set out realistic and achievable ways to reach it. By focusing on areas with the greatest return, we provide the extra dimension to propel you well beyond current performance.

Result

A detailed game plan containing practical steps you need to take to move forward, leverage opportunities, minimise risks and stay on track.

Step 3: Financial Forecasting

Keeping cashflow pumping

Crunching the numbers is crucial to keeping your business healthy. Accurate

financial forecasting provides an 'early warning system' to anticipate likely cashflow problems and take steps to avoid them. We'll equip you with reliable, up to date financial reports – powerful tools to give you greater control over your business and let you manage the present and confidently plan for the future.

Result

Financial targets will be set for the year, and you'll be in a strong position to measure and monitor your progress to maximise cashflow at all times.

Step 4: Business Mentoring

Gaining a fresh perspective

Are you too close to your business to be objective? Are you so busy working in your business that you've got no time to work on it? A Charter Partners mentor can be a highly effective and valuable asset to achieve your business success. You benefit from our awareness, insight and perspective through regular meetings to assess cashflow and business performance.

Result

A rewarding relationship and exceptional learning experience, that will challenge the way you think and act, inspire you to look at things differently and keep you accountable. What's in it for you?

- Improved business skills and results
- Greater confidence and control in running your business
- A well-defined direction for you and your team
- Tools to increase profit, control cashflow and reduce debt
- More confident decision-making

Because every business is different, we tailor the Business Optimiser to your specific needs, giving you the flexibility to select up to four of these progressive steps to suit your situation.

If you would like to find out more about the Business Optimiser program why not call your Charter Partners accountant today.

Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.

HENRY FORD



James McBurney
Senior Client Manager - Bundaberg
B. Comm (Acc)

Originally from Sydney, and a not-too-old boy of Sydney Grammar School, James gained his Bachelor of Commerce at the University of NSW. He worked with a small Sydney firm while completing his degree, progressing to a Big 8 firm during his professional year with the Institute of Chartered Accountants. The next stop (some 20 years ago) was Parkes in central NSW, where he later became a partner in a small accounting firm. But the Sunshine Coast beckoned – a place that would give James, his wife Liz and sons Jonathon and Robert a better lifestyle and more education opportunities for the boys. James has now opted for the good life in Bundaberg and the chance to put his knowledge gained in 24 years of public practice to good use for the benefit of our clients.



Linda Cooley
Client Manager - Gympie
B. Bus (Acc)

Linda graduated from the University of Southern Queensland in 1998 with a Bachelor of Business. She has 14 years accounting experience, which makes her well placed to understand clients' requirements. Linda enjoys personal interaction with clients and strives to provide them with reliable, quality service and foster enduring and productive relationships. The team at Charter Partners also enjoy Linda's occasional joke and 'quirky' sense of humor.



Lynne Blake
Compliance Manager - Gympie

An eye for detail, a diverse knowledge base plus 20 years experience in the accounting profession (11 of these years at Charter Partners) have made Lynne a formidable asset to the Charter Partners team. Her quality control efforts and high standards ensure that any work leaving the office is always the best it can be – this is what makes her the quality champion within the firm. Lynne's dedication to providing clients with a compliance service that is second-to-none shines through in her consistently thorough and efficient approach. Lynne and her family enjoy the rural lifestyle of their acreage at Cedar Pocket.



Tamsyn Lindsay
Client Manager - Gympie
B. Bus (Acc)

Tamsyn graduated from the University of the Sunshine Coast with a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) and has recently completed the study segment of the CPA program. An accountant with over 8 years experience in public practice accounting firms, Tamsyn enjoys working in an environment where she can constantly learn, solve problems and help clients make informed decisions. Having moved to Cooloola Cove from Brisbane, Tamsyn is enjoying a more relaxed lifestyle with plenty of fishing, boating and gardening thrown in.

Have you taken advantage of our FREE Business Health Check yet?

At Charter Partners we believe that sometimes you need to give a little back. Over the last 12 months things have been a little tough for a lot of businesses out there so we'd like to offer every client of ours a **FREE Business Health Check**.

If you want your business to come out of the downturn in better shape than it went in, a Health Check is a must. Our objective review of your business pinpoints current problems that may be affecting performance, and can act as an early warning for future issues.

To book your **FREE Business Health Check** please call us today so that you'll know just what shape your business is in.



The ladies Gympie Miners showed they were a force to be reckoned with in '09

The Gympie Miners showed on many occasions flashes of magic and superb ball control. The soccer starlets have often been seen in the press including the Gympie Times over the last 6 months and it's easy to see why with so many impressive wins under their belt.

Charter Partners congratulates the team on their impressive performance over the season and we will certainly continue to support the girls in 2010.



GYMPIE OFFICE

Level 3, Cullinanes Centre
104 Mary Street
GYMPIE QLD 4570

T: 07 5482 1533

F: 07 5482 7289

BUNDABERG OFFICE

Unit 2, Ground Level
7 Takalvan Street
BUNDABERG QLD 4670

T: 07 4153 3444

F: 07 4153 3455

MAROOCHYDORE OFFICE

8 Pikki Street
MAROOCHYDORE
QLD 4558

T: 07 5451 9933

F: 07 5452 7599