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male dominance created opportunity

Who said you can't launch a successful business in a male-dominated industry? Louise Pope, owner of a highly respected accounting and finance recruitment practice in Sydney, did it while in her early thirties. Here, she shares the ingredients you need to succeed.

Ten years ago Louise Pope boarded a plane from London. She arrived in Sydney to launch the Australian operations for one of the world's largest financial recruiters.

Leading the accounting and finance division, Louise opened new offices and new product lines. She managed the group through significant growth from a standing start. During this time, Louise won various leadership and sales awards for her role within the organisation including 'The Most Successful International Start-Up'.

In 2004 Louise hit a glass ceiling within her organisation due to the company's limited Sydney client base. "The challenges here are as great as anywhere in the world. However, the smaller marketplace created limitations. I was faced with a career dilemma that was outweighed by my love for Australia. After looking around the market, I quickly realised that the opportunities just weren't there."

"So I decided to create my own. I recognised there was a gap in the industry, as all of the finance recruiters were male dominated or male owned. However, an increasing number of females were entering the accounting profession. The answer to my dilemma was staring me right in the face." Louise said.

In late 2004, Louise founded what is now Aequalis Consulting - a now highly respected Sydney based accounting and finance recruitment practice. It provides tailored strategies for small to large enterprises across a diverse range of industries to attract and retain the most talented finance professionals in the market. Over the years Louise's energy, passion and ambition still fuel the business and will continue to contribute to Aequalis Consulting's long-term success.

Louise's eight tips for success in business:

- **Make it happen, live the dream.** As a child, my 93 year-old grandmother said, "Louise, you can do whatever you want to do." She was an early feminist and throughout my life I have held on to that belief. My advice is, give it a go - what have you got to lose? The worst case scenario is that you fail, but ultimately you win because you will learn so much along the way.
- **Work it, baby.** Men are from Mars, women are from Venus, and they just think differently sometimes. Diversity contributes to the development of new ideas and new solutions and shouldn't be a dirty word. As a female in a traditionally male dominated industry, I've been able to utilize my intuition to match the right job seekers with my clients, and I've created a great business along the way. Whatever your unique strengths are, embrace them!
- **Make your passion your business.** You have to have the intelligence to be able to work out the best course of action. You also have to back that up by having the emotional intelligence to be able to convince people that what you're telling them is the right thing to do. I think it's a general characteristic of a good leader - passion, commitment and drive; but it's also the vision of being able to bring people along on the journey with you.
- **Find a mentor.** This has been absolutely critical and I wouldn't be where I am without my mentors. A mentor is someone you feel comfortable being able to talk with professionally and sometimes about personal things. They need to be someone who understands you particularly well and knows what inspires you. It is never someone who is critical, but someone who helps you navigate complex problems along the journey. Picking the right mentor can really help you grow.
- **Outsource.** You just can't do it all yourself. Understand and know your strengths and make sure you focus on those strengths. At some point, if you want to grow your business, no matter what your level of attachment is, you need to hire other people to whom you can delegate responsibility. Outsource to experts - this will free you up to do the things you love.
- **Network, network, network.** Attend events, join industry networking groups, use social networks such as LinkedIn. Become an expert in your field, but make sure you adopt the 'pay-it-forward' attitude: don't expect to get immediate results, help others - pay it forward and payback will happen.
- **Create a winning team.** I believe I have a great team; a team of people who share my passion and vision and are part of the journey. Don't be afraid to hire people who are better than you. Surround yourself with the best people and treat your team with the same level of respect and empathy that you would expect as an employee. Celebrate the wins along the way. And finally, you owe it to yourself and your team to let go of bad apples. They can be cancerous and can be a significant cost to your business.
- **Finally.** Love what you do, do what you love. People always ask me, "What words of advice can you give me? What should I do when I want to start my own company?" I say it's as simple as believing in the product, having a vision and don't do it just for the money because you will be very disappointed. You have to make sure you do it because you love it and you have faith - the rest just follows.