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THE PRACTICE

**SASS FINANCIAL**

# Start small, dream big

Written by: Jessica Gadd

Canna Campbell's clients receive a quarterly video market update that explains market movements in the past three months and assesses the risk versus return equation. It's just one of many things she's learned to do as a solo operator.

"Starting out as a one-man band has given me the opportunity to really widen my skill set outside of designing investment strategies ... areas like PR and branding were a foreign language to me, now I understand how to write a press release and use social media," the 31-year-old says, explaining that marketing and public relations are just two areas she's taught herself since establishing SASS Financial in 2007.

Being up-to-date with technology is important to her because it helps her business maintain a competitive advantage. In addition to video updates for her clients, she blogs regularly, often receiving daily hits in excess of 100 – double the number of her clients. The blogs cover all sorts of matters, but always make a point about the importance of managing financial matters. This year, Campbell commenced motivational seminars on financial matters specifically for young women, called Honey Money, which she plans to run two or three times a year. "The seminars aren't really for profit – they're not even aimed at my client base," she says.

"It's more about giving back – I do it because I see a need. There are a lot of young women out there with credit card debt who are under the misapprehension that Prince Charming will come along one day and buy them their dream home. They've got their heads buried in the sand. The reality is, often Prince Charming has credit card debt of his own, not to mention it's an irresponsible way of thinking. Even if they make small differences now, it could help them down the track and make life a lot easier."

A big part of her client base is retirees, but the younger clients she does have are mostly in their late 20s, motivated, career-focused, keen to get ahead financially but time poor. She notes they're mostly happy to take her advice and hand over the day-to-day management of their finances.



CANNA CAMPBELL

"They recognise their financial affairs are important, but they're too busy, don't know what the best strategy is for them and what free time they do have they want to spend with their young families. They're happy to pay me an annual fee and hand it over so they don't have to think about it – it takes a huge weight off their shoulders," she says.

Campbell entered the industry at quite a young age, while completing a bachelor of commerce majoring in economics and marketing at Macquarie University. Six months working for a certified financial planner (CFP) inspired her to obtain her own financial planning qualifications, which she achieved while still studying for her bachelor degree. For the next six years she worked for several different financial planning firms, ending in a two-year stint as a financial planner at St George Bank.

"In all of these positions, my employers really gave me plenty of opportunities and the chance to rise to challenging assignments. Often it was a case of sink or swim. But the good thing was I learnt a lot in a very short space of time ... and I am extremely grateful for those opportunities," she says.

It was one of her clients at St George Bank who inspired Campbell to go out on her own. She'd always dreamt of running her own fee-for-service business, with a focus on ongoing, long-term client relationships, but had never dared to actually do it because it never seemed the right time.

"After I handed in my resignation and established SASS Financial, most of my former clients tracked me down. They wanted to maintain the continuity with one adviser and also they really valued my advice," she says.

For help with establishing a business plan she turned to Securitor business development manager Euan Sneyd, who she says also

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**SNAPSHOT**

**Company name:** SASS Financial  
**Location:** Sydney  
**Number of advisers:** 1  
**Number of clients:** 50  
**Platforms:** Asgard, Wealthtrac Direct Equities  
**Software:** AdviserNetgain  
**Research:** eQR Securities, Aegis  
**Staff:** 1  
**Dealer group name:** Securitor

helped her maintain motivation levels, ensure her business was compliant, and even helped brainstorm names for her business.

"Actually, credit for the name also goes to the same client who suggested I go out on my own. The initials in their business name stood for something and that inspired me to do the same with SASS, which stands for strive, achieve, succeed, secure," she says.

A worrying trend that Campbell sees emerging is that as people become increasingly worried about rising debt levels, the state of the global economy, and rising unemployment, they're looking to cut the wrong costs.

"Instead of cutting things like Foxtel or other luxuries, some people who have overcommitted themselves financially are talking about trying to find savings on their accounting, insurances and professional advice, which is ridiculous because often these are the areas where these services not only save you money, but help ensure you stay ahead of the game. The perceptions of value can get a bit skewed when people over-leverage themselves or feel financially trapped," she says.

She's pleased to also identify a positive trend in a growing respect for quality advice, and she feels that finally people are recognising and valuing the long-term service CFPs can provide – and this includes younger people. She says a lot of younger people have either seen their parents succeed financially and want to emulate them, or have seen their parents make a mess of things and want to avoid making the same mistakes. Whatever the reason, she's just glad to see people take responsibility for their financial wellbeing.

"We come in with nothing, we leave with nothing, so what matters is that we have the best time while we are here but be responsible along the way," Campbell says. ■