**Matt Lowlett Interview Transcript – Ep 20**

**Matt** [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of Power Up Your Business podcast, I'm your host, Matthew Jones, owner of Cube Performance, where we assist tradie business owners to earn more, work less, and ultimately create a great lifestyle for themselves and their family to really ensure that the business serves them. Through our Power Up program, we coach, we mentor, we guide, we provide templates, tools and tips and a thriving community to really assist tradie business owners go to that next level in a seamless fashion. We're passionate about learning. We're passionate about people working smarter, not harder. And in this episode, this is a great episode from my point of view, with Matthew Lowlett, the owner and operator from Endless Landscapes based in Wollongong. Matt has been a long time loyal client of ours on our Power Up program since 2014. And you really hear Matt's journey. Matt has been on a rollercoaster journey like pretty much every business owner out there. Nothing goes in a straight line from a business perspective. It's always ups and downs, but there are some really key learnings here on Matt's journey now of ten plus years of being a business owner and how he really since COVID, he had to really pivot his business in terms of saying no to types of clients. So he got really focused in on the type of client we want to work for. He really got focused in on his team. He invested plenty in his team, good connection, good buy in, and really developed his team members and created this thriving environment for his team members to personally grow and opportunities to grow. And then really listen to Matt too how he's really focused on his numbers, using his numbers to give him peace of mind, to make educated decisions going forward. So really great takeaways here for everyone, a lot of people will be able to resonate with Matt's story. It's definitely a great podcast and I really enjoyed the discussion we had and I hope you enjoy the conversation as well. Cheers everyone.

**Speaker 2** [00:02:15] [00:02:15]Because there's too much on the line. You're sacrificing a shitload now, and your family need to benefit. You gotta make learning a passion for yourself. The trigger for me, I came to realise that. Hey. I've got to get better at business. [14.8s]

**Matt** [00:02:38] So Matty Lowlett from Endless Landscapes, thanks for having you on [00:02:42]board. [0.0s] You have been a client of Cube Performance on the Power Up program since 2014, you have been a long-term loyal client. It is so good to finally get you on the podcast.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:02:53] Yeah, a bit of a journey, hasn't it been?

**Matt** [00:02:55] It's been a great journey, and especially the last couple of years and that's where I want to sort of delve into what's been happening in the last couple of years. But let's throw back to say that 2014 when you were early in your journey as running a business because in 2014, how long have you been running a business, really running Endless Landscapes before you connected with us.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:03:16] As a company structure, we were 2012. So we're coming up to 11 years this year, but prior to that, I was running around as a sole trader. I was sort of been running a business to some extent since 2007. So quite a long time and just sort of yet building it and it's evolved and changed and you know, I really enjoy the business side of things. I really enjoy what I do full stop. But yes, it's obviously investing in myself and trying to get it right and, you know, still learning and still building and getting it right and continuing that journey to sort of, you know, create opportunities for people who work for me as well as myself. And yes, just I'm really enjoying it and we're in a good spot. It's exciting.

**Matt** [00:04:03] It's definitely exciting, especially with our position now coming into that 2014 stage where we, we first connected. And so at that stage you've been operating for six years or thereabouts, six years or something, coming to that six year mark, what were some of the reasons or the, I suppose, the motivation to contact us and get that external help? What were some of the things you're facing at the time we thought, shit, I need some help here, I need some guidance or assistance.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:04:32] Yes, I think it was really about just trying to push it to that next level and understand. Look, obviously working with yourself, we've been able to, you know, really build the numbers around the business and how the business actually works and learning that side of it. Like obviously I was classic background, you work in the business on the business and sort of you've told me to change that mindset of working in the business daily to sort of on the business continually. This is not a quick fix, but a continual process that we build on to make it better and better systems and just understanding them. I think that was probably the attraction and just, you know, we're in a good spot. We were doing okay, but I don't think I'd ever been given the knowledge required to operate a business to how it should be run.

**Matt** [00:05:26] You're very good on the tools, You're very good at getting things done, you're very good at delivering. And I think that's where you are definitely unique to most tradie business owners out there, where we provide you with the knowledge, the templates, the how to, and then you really took it to the next level in terms of knowing the numbers and really sort of understanding them, which is again, very unique. And like you sort of mentioned, using those numbers then to really tailor your decision making and giving you that confidence moving forward because when we started in that 2014 and you know, we've got a lot of traction and this is where I want business owners to understand that it's a journey. Is it you know, over in the preceding years, some things didn't you know, it wasn't a straight line, right?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:06:12] Not at all.

**Matt** [00:06:12] There's times there over those years and around that 15, 16, 17, 18 where you think, I know I've sort of got this I'm okay and way and you sort of take your, your focus off working on the business or what we call the success habits. You don't really bring your A-game to managing the business appropriately. And then you got sucked back into a degree in the business again and you were doing a lot. So for our listeners, you know, Matt is based at Wollongong, doing a lot of projects in Sydney. Would you agree you're definitely running around being really, really busy, but it was to the detriment of your cash flow and also your personal health.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:06:54] Yes, that's right, that's right. You can only run around for so long and like I say, being busy is different to being productive, you know, and you can easily get caught up in, Yes, we've got jobs, let's get them done. We make money, we move on to the next quote. We get to quote one; we move on, we do the job. But there's more to it than that. If it's going to be a long-term play, I think. I think that can only get you so far for so long. And what we realised was, is that all of a sudden we were coming up against these other bits and pieces where we hadn't concentrated on other things within the business other than getting the job one and done. And then those cracks sort of started to show. And as we grew, there's less room for error because. You've got staff that rely on you. You've got your family that relies on you. And you can't be, you know, having those cracks sort of splinter through. And so it was really about trying to patch those holes and learn and build out systems to sort of stop those cracks developing in like you say, the success habits. And they're still true today. Like, if you take a month off, you're three months behind because you sort of didn't continue what you needed to do and all of a sudden that shows up. So yes, you might have solved another problem by getting the job done. But you know, you've got a cash flow issue because you weren't sending out your invoices on time or, you know, you weren't just didn't continually get in and send them out when they needed to be done. And that creates another problem. But sometimes you just get caught up in that focus. And I think that's where I was just getting the job done, where we've got these jobs here and we're getting them done and we're not looking at those success habits of forecasting work and forecasting pipeline. And then all of a sudden jobs that you thought you may have been doing, they're not happening anymore and there's no backup because you just weren't looking and it could be as simple as just looking at a spreadsheet. It doesn't have to be super complicated, but you need to have some sort of goal system or target that you're running to.

**Matt** [00:08:52] Yes, 100% and that's where that sales pipeline process that you are definitely doing a great job on now and that forecast and looking forward, make sure your pipeline is full. And the key thing there about and this is with everyone listening is not having a pipeline full of just A, B, C, D clients. It's having a pipeline full of A-clients. And I think when you've got that visibility looking forward and especially when you're thinking about we want to be profitable, it's not about turnover, we don't care about turnovers, it's about profit. If you want profit, you know, then you need to have in your pipeline A-class clients that value what you deliver. They're prepared to pay. They pay on time. And in some of the tough calls that you made, especially leading into COVID, sticking to the process through COVID and saying no to jobs, you know, pulling back from Sydney, pulling back from types of commercial work that you're doing and really positioning your business for work that you love doing, that your team loved doing, you know, more to your skill set, but more importantly, the clients now that you're working with, they really appreciate and value your expertise. You know, it's great the way that you've got, you know, providing designs and you really sort of stepping the client. And this is where what you've done really well, you've really provided your clients with peace of mind from the design, right through the construct and the completion side, because now you're focusing on that type of client as opposed to trying to focus on all clients, which keep you busy. So that's a key thing with you, you've done really well with your success habits, is that, yes; I can't focus on all clients. It's not about being busy; it's about what are the types of clients I've got to do really well. And I want to talk about your team in a little bit because you've done a great job on your team, but just from your listeners' point of view. So with Matt really working really hard through COVID, a lot of change. And I think we've all been everyone's got their own COVID story and then coming out of COVID, especially in New South Wales, pretty much rain the whole 2022, Matt, I'm not far off. And when you're a landscaper, that's pretty tough. And what you delivered in 2020 to calendar year 2022 in terms of not many days, you know, a lot of the team are still getting in isolation with COVID sick. And again, it was a tough market to recruit. But to your credit, what you delivered in the six months was unbelievable from January to July. So for the first six months, you pretty much only delivered over $1,000,000 worth of work in six months alone compared to the previous six months that you only delivered about $600,000 worth of work. So what you're able to deliver in that last 12 months was exceptional. And congratulations, you got one of our awards, the Educating Award. And just to let in terms of what Matt did in that six months increases revenue by what have we got here, 338,000, which is a whopping 27%. And again coming back to it now and this what I want you to sort of explain Matt, you know, how do you get the confidence to say no to certain clients? Again because easy, everyone gets feeling of too busy and I don't want to say no, but what really got you to the stage where, you know what, I need to get focused here. I need to say no to a certain client base. I need to really get my team and what you're alluding to my quoting right, managing the jobs right, so my cost of sales is right, my profitability is right. When did that sort of that light bulb, that really confidence come to say, you know, I'm scrapping all this type of work?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:12:38] I think we toyed with it, you know, geographically where we were trying to focus our work for a while. We always knew that, you know, like we always used to run into Sydney and people who work for me, we are used to running in the Sydney from when they did they trade or if they weren't directly working for me previously, they were running to Sydney and we just thought that was the way it needed to be but it wasn't. And then I think around the time that COVID sort of struck us on 2021, we were in this whole not a whole, but like we were very reliant on we were a contractor. We were not; we're not the head contractor. So we were working for other people a lot and not so much having our own job where it was reliable and it was good. But, you know, when that thing ended, there was a bit of a hole. [00:13:30]So I think that was a light bulb so, [0.7s] we got a chance to reset here. We know where we want to focus so let's start right. And the results that you talk about there, they're not, you know, an overnight thing that was probably 12 to 18 months of getting to that point and turning the years and then things start to settle. And we've been able to springboard from that point now to sort of where we are. And we're doing some good things and the opportunities that we were looking at to do for our for our team and for ourselves personally, are happening due to all those choices that we made and the refocus of we're not going to go to Sydney. We're not going to say yes to doing commercial work where we're just a singular trade amongst ten trades that are working for a big builder because we're at the mercy of everyone else. We want to be the head contractor. There's probably a little bit more risk of things that we need to do to protect ourselves in making that decision, to focus in doing that. But overall, once we'd made that decision, it turned out to be, you know, the right thing for us, which sort of helped us deliver the results. You know, you weren't at the mercy of, you know, this guy hasn't turned up today. So you guys are going to have to go away and reshuffle yourselves. You're in the front seat. You're the guy trying to get everyone to play on the same team. You know, it's by your rules and your values and just having that focus, like I say both geographically and what type of work stream that we were looking for has been really rewarding to sort of see that all come together.

**Matt** [00:15:01] And I think this is where massive credit to you, mate and Pat on the back in terms of staying persistent with that and resilient and patient and whatever other word you want to throw in there which comes into that what we talk about a lot, that latent potential where you don't see the results straight away. It takes time, but staying true to yourself and true to yourself and sticking to the process of the success habits. And one of things you alluded to, which you did really well, was I'm following up leads because of COVID. You had a lot of key projects that were on hold, but you just didn't let that sit idle. You stayed in contact with your relationships or the leads. You kept fostering those. You kept staying top of mind with those, so that when and for some, I think one in particular, it was about 18 months later that it's sort of like, are we ready to go now? You were front and centre. Why because you took the time to actually stay in contact with the client. You took the time to show the client that you care, and I'm ready for you when you're ready to go. And that's a massive thing that most tradie business owners don't do. They just think, oh, the job's on hold or forget about now and rush off to something else, the next shiny object. So I think credit to you to staying resilient and persistent there on doing the little things that don't give you the results straight away, but they give you that big payoff down the track. And just for the listeners, just on the back of 2022 for the first half of this calendar year so from July to December, FY23, so July 2020 to December 2023. Matt, good job, $1.2 million revenue, really low wage costs at 21%, tight cost of sale, operating profit pushing towards 15%. So again and what I want everyone to take away here is that by doing the little things really well, you can really position yourself. It's not about being busy, busy, busy one year and then catch your breath and then having to go again. You've done really well at positioning yourself, building assets, building a reputation, building a team to start leveraging these opportunities that when they present that you wouldn't have had a lot of these opportunities in the past because you didn't have time, because you were busy trekking up and down to Sydney doing too many jobs. What's your take on that? Would you agree with that?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:17:26] 100% the latent potential is a big one, you know, we've done obviously a lot of thought process around that and that's essentially exactly where it is, rather. Nothing's going to happen overnight. You've got to continually push forward and some days you're going to feel like it's not going to happen and you kick and stones down the road, but it's essentially just slowly building. And if you've got that long-term mindset, this long term-play in your business, which I think a lot of people do, if they've got the right people around them, that, you know, you are going to have a bad year. But how bad that year is going to be is going to rely around the systems that you built, the hard work that you put in behind the scenes. You know, like you say, if you haven't got the time because you're in the car and you travel on 4 hours a day, how are you going to ever have time to make those things better unless you're sacrificing your own personal time? And I think we all agree that, you know, we're happy to sacrifice some personal time. But if you can peel back 3 hours a day in travel, refocus, restrategise, you know, build better relationships and over, you know, 12, 18 months, just continually do those success habits week in, week out, month in, months out, year on, year out, you will see the results as latent potential. You know, all of a sudden everything sort of clicks. And it's not to say that you're not going to have a shitty week or a shitty month, but you're going to bounce back a lot better if you've got those key things in play continually.

**Matt** [00:18:56] And coming back to that latent potential we see just in society in general, people aren't patient. They expect it to happen straight away. You know, you put on an apprentice and you expect that apprentice hit the ground running or a tradesman, you expect to hit the ground running or you invest in training your team and you're not getting the results straight away. It's just like, oh it was a waste of time or when you invest in new marketing or you start looking at numbers and you get a new shiny object, new shiny bit of equipment, or it's not working straight away. And this is what you've done really, really well is because again, preceding these good financial results, you know, you had some really tough six month blocks where, you know, things weren't hitting the mark. And this is where I want everyone to really tap into what Matt said there. It's about playing a long game as a business owner; you can't measure it by six months, 12 months, 18 months. You are investing in a long-term game here, which is five years, ten years, 15 years. You're building a brand; you're building an asset. How can you build an asset? How can I build a scalable business where I can generate good quality of life, good return on my investment so I can actually earn more, work less and come back to create a great life. So because it is ultimately it's all about, I've got a responsibility driving this business to facilitate my family's lifestyle. So, again, really, really important here for everyone to take note about that, playing a long game. And again, credit to you, mate for being that persistent and really hat's off in terms of the way that you dedicate yourself to the success habits making sure. And just for everyone out there, success habits means you block time in your calendar to look at your sales pipeline, you block time in your calendar to look at your numbers, to look at your quoting structure, your actual V budget, profitability, you know, to invest in your team. So these are all key things that you just put in your calendar. Now, for those of you who are listening and you can probably hear, you're already saying, I haven't got time for that. You haven't got time not to do this. You have not got time not to do this. So you've got to invest in what Matt is saying working on the business, because otherwise you can quickly work hard. But at the end of the year, there's no return there. And that's a really pleasing thing now and what you've done there Matt, too, is, you know, we talk about the team because one of the key things that you've done really well is investing in your team. And I think talk me through how again over that last 12 months so in 2022, again, we've come out of COVID, we've had a lot of wet weather, you've had a lot of projects and it sort of doubled up to get done. You're undermanned, understaffed, and your team delivered very, very impressive what your team delivered, agree?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:21:43] 100%, you can't do it without a solid team. You know, you just there's too much responsibility then on yourself. And, you know, I'm very fortunate with the people that work for me and that have been working for me for a long time. You know, the people that we've got in on board who are here and here long-term are focused. They are buying into what we're doing. You know, they enjoy, this is not a job. But we still have passion for in the landscaping industry that we love. And, you know, we get so much satisfaction out of the built product that we are lucky enough to be given the opportunity to build that, you know, but that only gets you so far. You've got to have some sort of system in place. Again, as we talk about in building, you know, opportunity for your staff, building goals for your staff, looking out for your staff, you know, there's always going to be something that gets thrown in the mix that, you know, is outside of work, which, you know, ultimately becomes your concern or your problem or something that you need to fix. But, you know, if you've got the right people around and I think that you will do that for them anyway, you know, because you do care about your staff and you want to provide opportunity and growth and you want to see them do well in life. And I think that's probably the best thing that we could get out of it, is that, you know, it supports my family and that's great. But if we can build something for everyone where the tree grows and everyone else grows and everyone's focused and we're all buying into what we're doing, you know, we want to be the best landscape contractors in the area as part of our vision and to be building the best projects and designing and working with the best people. And it just makes us so much better.

**Matt** [00:23:28] And I love the way you frame that about again, providing opportunity for people in your community essentially. And providing opportunity to grow and we talk about that care and compassion. And this is where we talk a lot about we got that less is more mentality where, you know, you don't need a big team to deliver great outputs. What you need, you need to be a very efficient team. You as a leader need to be very spot on with your planning. You know, we talk about planning the week ahead on a Friday. Make sure everything all I's are dotted and T's are crossed and that, you know, you make the calls. But I think what you did really well into and again, there's no surprises why you delivered such a great result as that year in January 2022 you really bought into our process of that reflection, you know, sitting down with each of your team members and getting them to reflect on the prior year. So again, this is what just for your listeners just to frame it because it's all about context. We've just come out of 20,21 very tough, tough period at the back of COVID. We were coming into a wet period around that time as well. Matt's business again, the prior year 2021 wasn't great. It was tough. You know, the numbers weren't there. Matt could have easily have gone through, you know, starting 2022, stuff this, let's just work, you know, not going to worry, I haven't got time to sort of worry about the team per se or the individuals per se. But you really again grabbed hold of this process, the reflection process way of getting each your team members to reflect on their achievements from the previous year, things that are holding them back, things that they need help with and then investing, you know one-on-one discussions with them, chats with them, conversations with them to get to know them, and then building their goals for 2023 now for 2022, and you've done it again this year as well, but just touch on how important you think that investment in that, you know, couple of week period in January 2022 was for your team to really just grab hold and you know, that loyalty, that passion, that commitment, whatever else to deliver unbelievable results, like talk me through, I want to touch on some of the emotional conversations you had with some of your team members there when you were sitting down with them. But how important was that investment at the beginning of 2023 to lead you to where you are now?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:25:51] Yes, look, it was definitely something that obviously like as part of working with yourself, and this is what we're going to do. And, you know, rolling out the reflection document was a great opportunity to sit down at the start of 22 and sort of refocus. And obviously, you know, we'll get to this in a minute, but we done that process again this year. But just seeing the feedback through like so we got us through a tough year. We had two metres of rain. You are still mucking around with this, you know, on again, off again, COVID, people are still getting sick here and there. And you know, there's still a bit of uncertainty around what was going on, but it sort of just pushed us forward and cemented that connection between myself and the team. Overall, this is what we're focusing on, this is what you were individually focusing on and we're going to go through and implement bits and pieces throughout the working year that's just outside of what you say that I was going to work, let's get the project done to really connect and sort of provide opportunity and goals for our staff to buy into it, to get them excited, to get them going. And it was amazing to see that after I say a tough year, we got to the end. We are pumped, you know, we've got the jobs done. We're really happy with what we've achieved as a team for the output for the year. But then rolling into this year and doing that reflection, we had a big team reset day, which was awesome at the start of the year. But then when we did the one-on-ones, we look back at those January 22 goals and just to see like it blew a couple of people away like how much stuff that actually completed like you get lost in life. You get lost in the go, go, go and then to look back, alright, well, these were the goals that you set. We actually blew them out of the park and you've done this and you've learnt this and you picked up these skills and it's more than it just being about a job. It is getting somewhere, you know, you haven't just done 12 months, got your wage, you know maybe saved, maybe didn't, whatever, you've actually built on yourself personally too. And I get a lot of satisfaction out of that and seeing the boys and my team grow. And like I say, we built on a real success habits. We did the reflection document January 22, but we took it to the next level. This year we did team reset day, we took a full day, we dedicated it, we went through, we said, thanks for last year. We really appreciate it. We look back at all that time that we spent through the tough times and all that good feedback and goals that we'd set and said, look at these projects we completed. Look at these goals and the focus and we stopped we said we wanted to work geographically, locally, and we did that for, you know, 90% of the year and it was a really good day. But then, like I say, to roll out the reflection document again and look back on the whole of 22 and all the things that people have achieved was really satisfying not only for myself, but I think for a lot of the people that I sat down and spoke with. So we've reset the goals, we've changed the bar, moved it up a little bit, got everyone excited for 23 and I'm really keen to see how it all rolls out again. What are we going to do? We're already it's February, middle of February, like the years are ticking away super quick. Where are we going to get to? And I think it's going to be exciting to look back in 24 January again at how far not only the company but the individuals who have moved for themselves in terms of what they've achieved. So I'm pretty, pretty pumped like it was, you know, and I think we say this right, like, if you can't do all of it, you know, sometimes it might be a little bit too much and do all of those things. But if you just start like I only started, you know, say, January 22 and this is the latent potential that we talk about, is that you got to start somewhere. If we ticked that box last year, we got great result last year based on the back of that and then to double up and double down and we all worked away from that team day and reflection time focused, you know, we've all walked away, we're focused and people can see what we've got to do to get done and yes, definitely worthwhile. And this is where we talk about, you know, you've got to take time out. You know, you've got to sacrifice a day. You know, you can't look at it from a cost because as an investor, can you afford to not do it? It's probably the question you need to ask yourself. But, you know, small steps. It doesn't have to be the whole hog. But if you continually moving forward, you'll find that latent potential.

**Matt** [00:30:23] Well, I think the thing that again, there are small steps and this is what I want everyone to understand out there that Matt just didn't get the results just because I just had a meeting. The level of detail and planning and preparation, you went in there, you nailed it. And in our client community, Matt is 10 out of 10 in terms of delivery, everyone in our community is pretty much using Matt as a benchmark and to roll out to conduct the team reset meetings and the reflection and then the personal, you know, 2023 goals. And so what I'm talking about to everyone listening, these are part of our processes and templates that we roll out and Matt just nailed it. And it's one of the key things that I want, like what Matt was saying, it's an investment and what we always say, if you're not going to do it, great, don't do it. So there are probably some people now thinking, oh, you obviously have a meeting and I'll talk about Reflection Document 101. But unless you're going to fully lean into it, do it well, don't do it, because you'll actually embarrass yourself and you are likely to piss people off.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:31:23] And look, I'm guilty of it, too, this is a journey for me. I've half asked it and got a shit result too, you know, like, it's about how much effort you want to put in. You know, obviously we had a good result last year. I wanted to refocus even myself and push things. Like, let's see if we're going to do these things. Let's you know, we're at the point now where I've got the opportunity because I'm not in the car for fucking 3 hours in the afternoon. You know, I've got the time to invest in this even if it's in the evening. I still dedicate some of my personal time outside work because, you know, I want to see a good result. You know, I want everyone to thrive and we got that with our team reset day. And it was really satisfying, probably more satisfying than completing a job because, you know, everyone was buying it. We had a great day, everyone walked away, we're focused, early start of the year, we're ready to go. Not to say there's not going to be hiccups, but, you know, I think that that's going to soften the blow on the hiccups.

**Matt** [00:32:21] 100%, what you're investing in, you can ride through those hiccups, as it were. You know, you can push through the challenges because of all this, because you're building trust, man, you know, I mean, you're building, people know that you care about them. And just to clarify, when we're talking about this reflection and the goals '23, the majority is about personal stuff. For some people it's about getting up early and going swimming or trying to help them with personal savings or, you know, have a better lifestyle, in terms of [00:32:46]bed. [0.0s] So this is about just them as individuals and some of the conversations I know you've had, you know, got quite you know, there were a lot of tears and a lot of emotion, which brought up a lot of emotion in some of your team members. So when you get to that sort of level the trust and, you know, just goes off the Richter and like what I said with our community, we have weekly community calls. I said, yes, you've set your team up to run through brick walls for you now because they know that you care about them as individuals. And I love what you said, you get more kick out of seeing this growth and develop personal development in your team, showing how they're getting more confident, how they're growing and again that looking back over the 12 months, how good is that, wrote it down, made a commitment. Tick that off, tick that off, tick that off. You're progressing as individuals.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:33:41] And you got to have these goals, like I say, it's got to be more than just completing the project, kicking the stone down to the next job because yes, there is some sort of satisfaction there. But that connection to the personal side of things like you are spot on walking, I reckon 75% of it was personal goals and they were willing to share those with me, which is amazing. And you know, I only want the best for my team. And so if there's anything that I can do to help, then I will. You know, sometimes it's, you know, let's be honest, you know, you've got a business to run, but where you can I think you if you can step out and try and help and just push people along for them in the right direction, you know, not everyone has guidance in their life. Sometimes the workspace is their only guidance. So you need to be conscious of that and how you treat people and, you know, generally, if you've got an issue with someone 95% of the time, it's external to your company and what's going on. The world and the habitat that you create within your business are critical to how people are going to react. And, you know, you need to have those open pathways. You need to understand where those people are progressing. Otherwise, you know, there's potential, they'll just, you know, they'll leave. Why was that?

**Matt** [00:35:02] And it's got nothing to do with you or it's got nothing to do with the businesses. There's a lot of.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:35:08] External pressure.

**Matt** [00:35:09] 100% especially with phones and communication and information that's just ridiculous right now. So it's even more important again, to have these open dialogues and as you mentioned, some people their background, they've never had support no one's ever really believed in them. They've always been put down or they just haven't had a guidance or a father figure, as it were or a mentor. So these are great processes that you're putting in there. And again, especially unfortunately in the trade space, it gets overlooked. Unfortunately, you know, a lot of people now and you know, how many years have we been talking about prepare to thrive when others survive, and especially when we talk about winning the war on talent. So we talk a lot, for everyone listening, we talk about the win the war on talent. Now win the war on talent means we want to build that brand that attracts great people. We want to build that brand and that business that retains great people and that the people that are working have passion. It doesn't matter what craft you're doing. It's about building this environment, a community that, you know what, we can get this done. You know what, it's been running for two weeks and I'm two men down, but we will get this done because that's what we do and you've created that. And this is where so many people go how many years have I been saying, Matt that the crucial thing that you need to do for a competitive advantage is build that team, you know, be able to attract good people because that's going to be limiting. And now it's really those amplified via COVID, you know, in terms of the labour shortage and everything else that was unforeseen you know, couldn't see what was, there's no way you could predict what was going to happen there.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:36:50] Crystal ball.

**Matt** [00:36:51] Yes, that was a big crystal ball that one but you know; how important is it that we've been again part of the process, that long journey that we've been building. It just doesn't happen. You just haven't built a strong team with but your key team members, you know, how long have they been with you now with your structure, you're leading hands and you're the key supervision, seven years, six years?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:37:12] Yes between six and nearly ten.

**Matt** [00:37:15] Ten years.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:37:16] Yes, it's a huge commitment from them, which I will be deeply grateful for whenever that, you know; that point will be was to potentially end. You can't be unhappy with that but you know like I say coming back to, we got to implement these processes to look after people, to give them opportunity to grow to, you know, here's your opportunity. Easy buy in point you know like that could be, you know, where it is like, hey look, we've all done and focused and set our goals and this is where we want to get to like as a team geographically was a big one and like we've now got time, more time for our families. I've got people who have young families like myself. We can be home; we can get in the water in the afternoon. We're not stopping at, you know, Sandringham, you know, 7-Eleven every afternoon at 4:00 when we've already been driving for an hour just to get a cold drink, which used to be our thing. We just get out of the city and we'll stop there and we'll get a drink and we'll keep going like we've got time. We've created time through our process, but it's a continual process. Like, I've got to keep the finger on the pulse; I've got to keep pushing. We've got to keep looking at the market and what the market's doing and make sure that we align with, you know, their values and what they see as value from us. And make sure that we can deliver a good quality product. And I think if we can just continually do that and, you know, front up with, you know, we care about what we're doing, you know, if there's an issue, we'll sort it out, you know, and just push forward.

**Matt** [00:38:57] Well, I think that said, with that care and the care that you're showing with the team and they know that they are cared for that then comes out on the customer. The feedback and the quality that's being delivered on site are second to none, and that just comes through from that. The investment in the team and you know, you talk about values and you know how important, we create obviously, and you know, the way we do it here and that's again for listeners is very much the guiding light. It's the Bible. It's pretty simple the vision, I promise, and the values of what everyone needs to believe in and your team drive, you know, really drive that well and align with their choices to the values that because again of all that investment that then comes out and delivers customer service. So many businesses just flippantly like why aren't my team delivering? Why can't my team show passion? Why can't they be motivated? You can't just go out there and try and motivate someone. You've got to do what you're doing. Motivation is the outcome. It's not the initial strategy. I want you motivated. Well, you haven't, you haven't watered me man. You haven't given me any investment. You haven't given me any reason to be motivated. I'm just going to get out of bed. I'm going to do the least amount as I can. I'm going to put my hand at the end of the week and then I'm out of here. I'm going to give you nothing more. And when I've got a bit of a sniffle, I'm going to stay in bed.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:40:16] So I think we've built a bit of culture around that alone, we respect each other as a team that we understand that if one person doesn't come in, you know, it lets all of us down and we will step in where we need to, we'll look after people who are doing the right thing, simple as that. You come in when you need to and you pull through for everyone else and or you just you simply you don't you know, you're not taking days off for the sake of taking days off or whatever, we see that and we weed that out pretty quickly anyway.

**Matt** [00:40:51] Well, that's the thing, coming back to that now, where you've got the core team and obviously everyone buys in exactly what's required in terms of the way we do it here in the values. When you are recruiting new people now, how important and we talk about it and obviously what we say, hire slow, fire fast, you know, using that as a guiding light, if you get new people coming in and they don't fit the mould, they don't last, agree?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:41:14] No, that's right and it's simple things, like working on trying to make it different. Like say once again like, you know, I'll get my senior guys in, they sit down. They're part of that interview process. You know, we sit down; we make a decision together because at the end of the day, they're the guys that are on the ground working with this person. You know, I'm not always there. So it's crucial that they get some sort of input to that.

**Matt** [00:41:38] 100% and that's a key thing that, again, for them being included in the interview process and selection process, essentially they've got ownership of who's coming on board.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:41:49] Yes, that's right and like you said, if it's a younger apprentice or someone who's not a skilled look, they've got to teach them, the skills and, you know, you can't read a book like, you know, they need to be transferred from person-to-person in a face-to-face way to get the quality that you want. So you need to be thinking about that when you're going to, you know, how are we going to do this? How are we going to get and it comes down to the individuals. And I'm very lucky that the individuals who have that knowledge are open to passing it on. And they want other people to learn and they get satisfaction out of watching other people learn, too, which is awesome.

**Matt** [00:42:29] You know, you really created that culture of training and development or learning. Everyone, like you mentioned a little while ago, you get more satisfaction out of seeing someone grow and achieve personal goals as opposed to just the project, and you're fostering that and building that into the individuals where everyone's really comfortable roof collaborating and growing and sharing. Again, because a lot of people, they just don't want to share or they don't want anyone else to get better. They're not because they've got this insecurity. Again, credit to building that openness, right?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:42:59] Yes, we've got to get people in that want to, you know, like I said, the quicker you are skilled up and on the same page as us, the more benefit it is to all of us as a team, simple as that. You're not here to push a barrow. You're here to skill yourself up, understand, learn and it still comes down to the individual. They have to buy into it. They need to understand what they're buying into and get on board with that. If it's the right person, then, you know, essentially the team is just stronger for it.

**Matt** [00:43:27] 100%, I think and that's exciting and just really excited to see where the team is going to go over the remainder of this year. And then going forward, which again, we talk about that positioning, you really position that your team to really succeed and prosper going forward. So just a recap a couple of things, though, in terms of there are three key areas that you really in terms of the success habits that you focus on. Number one was your marketing, your sales pipeline, that's saying no and being stringent on that really focusing on it, being taught with that, not saying yes to everyone. Second key component, which, you know, parallel investing in the team, showing your care again and over time, you know, getting buy in, you know, growth, personal development, which is cool and coupled around that then the third key thing is the numbers. The importance of having accurate financials and again, this is where I want everyone from our listeners and those that have been listening before; you'll know that, you know, numbers are the key. Like at the end of the day, if you do not know your scorecard, you are running blind. Again, you could win all this work and not make a zac and that's not what we're about, agree Matt?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:44:37] No, not at all, not at all and I have been guilty of that, you know, in the past is your letting the ball slip on those sorts of things. But, you know, this is the thing we're in it for the long game. If you had a system and it didn't quite work, reinvent it, go again, get the numbers right, understand it better. You know, you've got time on your side.

**Matt** [00:44:58] And that's the thing we're talking about like now and making sure like, yes, every quote should be, don't do it, if you're not going to do your quote right, don't submit a quote. Do not submit a quote. Get the numbers right. And we talk about start from the start. Get it right from the start. So get the quote right bill the quantities right, your pricing right, your margins right. The priority there then is obviously making sure that purchase orders are correct, managing stock on ground or materials or inventory or credits. How important is it again, we talk about the detail, the fundamentals, doing it is easy, doing it is easy. Just getting it done is easy, but getting it done really efficiently and profitably is hard. And that's where you need the numbers to really guide you in terms of the processes, how like for you, like how do you get in your guru and everyone out there, like Matt loves a good spreadsheet. He is dead set the number one when it comes to spreadsheets and numbers and which is fantastic. But again, your growth sort of self-taught in this and knowing the numbers, how much does that give you peace of mind, knowing that you are in control because you know the numbers, you know the score, peace of mind knowing that because you know the numbers that you're making the right educated decisions and that you are positioning, you know, long-term, what do you think on that? How important is that?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:46:20] It has to revolve around having some sort of benchmark to work to how do you know? No one's telling you the rules in business. There are no rules in business. So you need to create at least a benchmark to work to. And you're right; it's about making that informed decision, right? Like you need to know you need to be able to, you might need a pivot at some point and change or do something differently. And if you don't understand where you are at that point in time, how are you going to make an informed decision to change your company or do what we did? Okay, you know what, look, making some money here and projects are good, but, you know, let's try something different, let's change a geographical focus, you know, and then we can go, right, well, we knew the numbers then, we've made these changes. Now let's look at them again, how we look? How are we stacking up? Are we happy? You know, is this where we need to be? Have we fallen short? And you can measure that and weekly, daily make decisions around that and, you know, take takes time. You got to build a process to understand the numbers. You got to build a system behind to gather the data, to spit the numbers through. So you've got something to look at. But it's very important to understand where you're heading based on the numbers, because they don't really lie. So if you are having a bad month, you know, and I think it's alright. If you have a bad month or you have a bad week or one job doesn't go right, that is okay. As long as you can pinpoint where you went wrong based on the numbers, because then you've got an opportunity to once again make an informed decision to change how you do it on the next one. Or, you know, why did I lose money on the job or what that portion of the job we got smoked on, why? And a financial number is a very non-emotional way to look at it to make an informed decision.

**Matt** [00:48:09] It's matter of fact, it's just a matter of fact, the numbers are a matter of fact. I think you made a great point there. And this is where finding out the why is critical. Most people don't stop to find out the why. They don't want to reflect. A lot of people don't want to look at their numbers because they're scared of what they're going to see. And again, everyone, I just implor everyone is running a business; you've got to know the numbers. If you don't know, get someone that can help you, but you cannot run blind or try and be ignorant to the numbers. You need to get your head out of the sand and start to learn the numbers like in our community, Matt, like you'll see people so for those who have never been involved in our community, we've got a great loyal community. And there's some people, when they first come in, they're not sure the numbers right, but you see them gradually over time, get more confident, agree?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:49:00] Yes, 100% and I think most people would agree that works with yourself or, you know, be part of the community that everyone gets a kick out of watching other people grow as well and have that turning point and understanding and having more confidence in about how they operate and the decisions that they're making and the you know, no one wants to see anyone fail, you know, like it's not about that, it's not about competition. It's not about, you know, what are they doing? It's about, you know, like, listen, like, you know, these are processes that you can put in place, collaborate with other people and, you know, talk to other people, bounce ideas because, you know, sometimes in the business world, it's a lonely place. It could be just you and it could be your partner, you know, like we say, we talk about external pressures and there are other things going on and you're in there, you're fighting each day to get your business rocking and making money and, you know, to provide for your family that's your number one goal. It's not about the ego, it's about providing for your family and your staff and getting it right.

**Matt** [00:50:04] I think what I love is it's not about ego. It's not about competition. Essentially, as business owners, we're on whole journey together, there's nothing better than collaborating and understanding and whether it be with numbers and, you know, and talking about things like pricing, the margins and learning of each other and I think one of the things around that too, like how important is it getting the right accountant or the right financial advice for yourself.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:50:34] I went through a few.

**Matt** [00:50:35] Went through a few, some heartaches there and I think probably, everyone's nodding in the background whoever is listening on, it's been tough to get the right people on board, but it is so important to get the right people on board to help you and guide you in your journey. But then once at the end of the day, though, you've got to own the numbers. They're your numbers. You cannot abdicate responsibility to someone else to say no, my accountant, my mother-in-law has got this. You must own it.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:51:03] You need to review it on your own terms and your own benchmarks, like what are you happy? What does your family need? What does your team need? There's revenue and then there's bottom line profit. And you know, you can the one percenters are in between. You tweak them, you can make more or if they go wrong, you're going to make less. So it's ultimately up to your decision. But if you've got a thorough understanding of how it all works, you can make decisions that, you know, hopefully tweak in the one percenters in the right way.

**Matt** [00:51:34] And the one percenters that we're talking about, you know, that cost us our percentage, you know, managing materials, manage your subcontractors, making sure we're tight on our ordering. Nothing goes to waste. If there's a variations, manage really well, if we over order there's credits, we make sure our planning is great so our team aren't standing around, so our wage costs are tight, you know, all these little things, we don't spend things on anything that's not adding value. And you don't know that unless you look at your scorecard. And we talk about how you track and report every month where it's, you know, what you actually did against what you budgeted to achieve. So it keeps you fully accountable, there's nowhere to hide when you look at the numbers.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:52:15] If you're fully accountable and it gives you the opportunity to look at it all, you know, if you're overspent somewhere, that's okay. But you need to pinpoint why, where did you overspend and what section was it an expense or was it cost of sale? And I think once you get yourself around that, you're looking at a benchmark, the best opportunity if you're going to start trying to, you know, give everyone a sense of, you know, we need to track this target is your cost of sale. You know, you can share that with your staff without there being any vulnerability around revenue or bottom line profit or what expenses are coming in. But you know, if you're continually talking with your staff about cost of sale and you know listen this relates to the projects. This relates to what's left over after we get the job done. And if we can work these one percenters in the right way, there's going to be more opportunity for you. You know, when you come at me and you say, I want a pay rise, or they said, I'm buying a house, I'm going to need more money, you know, whatever it may be. Everyone has got like I said external pressures that cost of sale is a really good one to sort of start sharing with people. Well, you know, this is the benchmark. You know, I don't want you going to Bunnings three times to buy three different lots of this, you know, do you really need to buy a 50 pack of grinder discs, you know, whatever it may be, that 1% better provides more opportunity.

**Matt** [00:53:31] 100%, I think what you're talking about there, sharing information like sharing your cost of sale information. So many business owners don't share the information with their team. And again, you don't have to pull the full blanket up and let them see everything or the full hood up at showing them what's it costing you per job? What is your budgeted, maybe allocated hours or budgeted, you know, quantities that need to be ordered so they understand to keep within those quantities are key to managing your one percenters. And that comes down to planning. This is where people need to slow down to speed up or as we say, you've got it. If you want to get these one percenters right, you've got to slow down, plan well, educate the team, communicate it with the team, understand they know the expectations. But again, so many people get caught in the rush, rush, rush, haven't got time for that. Just get the job done. And they don't even look, they get through the end of the year, they can't understand why they've got no cash in the bank and credit to you building this asset to really serve your lifestyle, your future investments and everything like that, it's great. Your commitment in terms of what you were trying to build and what you trying to achieve for your family is a credit to you and it's an exciting journey. I'm happy to be on your journey for the last eight years or thereabouts, champion and looking forward to the next part of the journey. Just before we finish off, what's one thing you'd give as a key takeaway for somebody who's been operating for 20 years, they need a change or even someone that's just starting, maybe some who is just starting. What's the one sort of piece of advice?

**Matt Lowlett** [00:55:09] Look, I think, get people around you that you can trust, you know. Like I said, try people out. You know, there are no rules in business. I think that, you know, you need to define your own goals. And so having good people around you to help you do that will sort of push you in the right direction, you know. You need to learn about your business. And to do that, you're going to need external help, you know, unless you're going to go to university and do a degree, which is going to suck up too much time, maybe you have enough time, awesome. But you need to get good people around you to help support your goals and your vision, the same as what you're doing for your staff. You know, by supporting them and creating goals, you need to get other people in to get around you to help you succeed where you want to go.

**Matt** [00:55:53] Yes, I definitely concur with that mate, great advice here about building that community and that support network. Yes, you definitely can't do it alone. And as you mentioned previously, it is lonely running your own show. So having a like-minded community around you, especially of the appropiate skill sets that have guide you is critical for everyone. Success. So I love it, mate, love it. Thanks, Matt, for jumping on board.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:56:18] No worries, pleasure.

**Matt** [00:56:20] Yes, a great podcast and good to finally get you on board after nearly three or four years. You're a busy man, right? I mean, I haven't been able to get you on.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:56:27] I think we only just made it work.

**Matt** [00:56:29] Did I just say we got it freed? But now, great speaking and heaps of awesome takeaways.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:56:36] Yes, now I it I enjoyed talking about it and as I, as I get more into it all, you know it really I get a lot of passion and enjoyment out of talking to other people about it. Thanks for the opportunity.

**Matt** [00:56:48] You're teaching me that you.

**Matt Lowlett** [00:56:50] Know you're the guru in life and I like that guru title.

**Matt** [00:56:55] On that note, the guru is signing off. Cheers, mate. Thanks. Here to change your last.

**Speaker 2** [00:57:06] Because there's too much on the line. You're sacrificing shit right now and your family need to benefit. You got to make learning a passion for yourself. The it for me come to realise that, Hey, I've got to get better.