



Game changer

Front Porch Properties has secured a solid footing in the industry, attracted a thriving clientele, and achieved phenomenal exposure in a little over four years. It's a known fact that many building companies go bust within the first few years, but it's much to the contrary for this Brisbane-based, boutique building business.

With owner, Rachael Turner at the helm, the success of the business has been bolstered by an innovative business model and the desire to meet consumer demand. And the proof is evident, with Rachael's award-winning homes regularly splashed across the glossy pages of magazines like Home Beautiful and Inside Out.

Front Porch Properties specialises in Classic-style and American-inspired homes and renovations.

"While my homes share many similar traits to the traditional Queenslander, I tend to ditch colonial and federation references and stick with cleaner lines and less fussy details to give a sleeker, more sophisticated look," says Rachael.

The demand for these types of homes isn't just limited to their aesthetic appeal. It's their ability to cater to the Queensland lifestyle, support sustainability and integrate effortlessly with existing streetscapes of quintessential Queenslanders that makes them popular.

Rachael believes that the key to success in the industry is to find your niche and nail it.

"Pick your specialty area and master the relevant skills, instead of taking a diluted approach to cater for all tastes. If prospective customers know you have honed your skills, they'll seek out your expertise and the jobs will flow."

While many builders bring to their business an extensive background on the tools and years of technical experience, Rachael has brought to the fore the valuable entrepreneurial skills she acquired in her earlier days.

"Before I got into construction, I trained at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music as a classical pianist and then ran a music school for 10 years. The business skills I developed then have been exceptionally relevant today."

Another key to Rachael's success is her propensity to manage time wisely, so she can focus on working on the business instead of in the business.

"Front Porch properties expanded rapidly, which meant I had to learn to delegate more effectively so I could concentrate on tasks that add real value to my business, rather than just getting caught up in the day-to-day. It's important to be proactive rather than reactive – so that you can run your day, rather than your day running you."

Rachael also charges prospective customers from the outset as she believes it filters out time wasters who are merely 'researching' from those who have sought you out specifically to do the work.

"I charge for consultations to weed out the tyre kickers and freeples (people who want to pick your brain for free). If someone pays you for your time, you know they're more serious about engaging your services."

Front Porch Properties is a full-service business that supports customers throughout their entire journey, not just part of it. Keeping all services, from design through to construction, in-house ensures communications aren't lost in translation from business to business – affording the customer greater peace-of-mind and more convenience.

"I believe prioritising your customer is one of the most important things you can do. Our industry has a pretty bad reputation as there are so many horror stories out there. That's not the experience I want my customers to have, so I strive for excellence with each job I undertake and put the customer first, every time. In my experience, this is key."

Rachael also suggests it's important to establish a budget upfront as customers generally want honesty and total transparency right from the get-go.



"As quickly as possible in the early stages, it's important to establish a cost estimate based on what the customer wants. This saves them from getting too invested early on, only to later realise they can't afford what they want. It also gives us a chance to make modifications early in the process and ensure everyone is on the same page."

Rachael's husband, Simon, works for Front Porch Properties one day a fortnight to stay on top of the business' financial position – which is vitally important for any small business. In addition, Rachael has an accountant who she calls on almost every week.

"Having this kind of help is invaluable to me. The financial running of a construction company is unlike any other business. I can understand why so many builders go bust! Expert help is crucial in helping me understand our work in progress (WIP) and assess where the business is actually sitting. Money that's sitting in your bank account isn't an accurate indication of the health of the business, because it could be tied to expenses for jobs you've got on the books."

