

## 10 questions with a Small Business Owner

Starting a business is a mammoth task, and I personally admire anyone who has taken to plunge to go out on their own. I have always been interested in the idea of setting up a business and to find out more I asked my Managing Director 10 questions all about starting up. Hayward Miller has been running for almost 12 years now and I'm sure there is a lot to be learnt from Andy's experience.

1) How did your decision to set up by yourself come about?

- a. I originally set Hayward Miller up as a training company. I worked in several companies where I trained large teams for salespeople and I thoroughly enjoyed the process. Yet the first few companies I approached through Business friends all asked for me to actually do the sales. Thus Hayward Miller began as a sales company.

2) What were your main concerns?

- a. My early concerns were will I ever get any business. But life became busy straight away once people I knew realized I was in the market to work for them.

3) Did you have a plan?

- a. Yes the plan was to start a sales company. I even created training material based on training I had given staff for other companies. However, once I realized that people needed a company that actually did sales and not lead generation, I developed a process that we now call the Hayward Miller way. This process begins with market research, creating the right data and targeting the right person in the right company for the sector you're working in. You then have the right telemarketer to communicate with that individual qualify they need using a qualification process. Then you get the enquiry and process that through the client. Then the process continues with the follow-up. Always remember follow-up follow-up follow-up.

4) What was the biggest obstacle?

- a. The biggest obstacle was cash flow. I was so focused on delivering the sales but I didn't realise the odd customer here and there and stop paying and one customer actually paid way too much and I had to sort that one out as well. But the biggest problem is cash flow.

- 5) What advice would you give to someone looking to set up by themselves?
- a. Always remember profit comes first, without profit you will not have a business. There is a book called profit 1<sup>st</sup> by a man called Mike Michalowicz and I would recommend that anybody starting a business operate the system he suggests in that book. You can have all the spreadsheets in the world with all the costs but you need barriers physical barriers.
- 6) Do you have any regrets?
- a. That's a good question, no. I have thought what would've happened if I continued in my career which was going very well at the time. But knowing what I know now, no, I have no regrets.
- 7) What's your biggest achievement to date with the business?
- a. Employing 44 people and helping them grow and evolve as individuals. Having had five apprentices over the last 12 years I've been able to give back to the community, as a community gave to me in my apprenticeship, that started back in 1980!
- 8) Do you ever wish you could work for someone else?
- a. Strangely I work for someone else every day. We currently have 16 clients with businesses all over the world. We are working for Jordan, Switzerland, Sweden, the USA, at the moment. We work for some great clients that really appreciate the work we deliver.
- 9) What was your first objective when you set up the business?
- a. I ran businesses for other people and always had a desire to run a business for myself. That said I already had an e-commerce business, that some friends and I set up many years before. But it wasn't the same as a Hayward Miller. Hayward Miller is my Company that I can run my way. That said I now have a great team for helping me run the business.
- 10) At what point will you feel your work is complete.
- a. When I'm dead.

Well there we are, a wide range of topics and queries covered there I just 10 questions. Question 10 was a bit to the point but other than that I can imagine these responses are very insightful and guiding for anyone weighing up the decision to start on their own.

By Dan Wright