

# When Business Meets Baby

Practical tools and tips  
for achieving balance

Exclusive Chapter Preview

## Chapter 2

# My Story

*“We all have a story to share”*

**W**hen I started writing this book I did not find it easy to share my story. I have since learned that stories are so important – they can offer you advice, a fresh perspective and a feeling of support. They can help you feel part of something bigger. I hope that my story helps you by allowing you to reflect on your own life, and to make positive changes.

### **The “business me”**

Visionary, my current business, has always felt like my firstborn child. I started it way back in 2004, simply to enable event companies to contract me as needed. Sadly, my mum passed away after I started Visionary, so I dealt with grief and depression at the same time as starting a business. I secured some work with a local event company. Fast forward one year and I helped them to secure a contract – this saw me being employed full-time with the company, and shelving Visionary. Doing so gave me the opportunity to get a mortgage and my first house!

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Three years later, I left the full-time position to take on a part-time job. This allowed me some breathing space while I worked out whether or not I still wanted to do events and marketing. People then started knocking on my door, asking me to run their events – so Visionary was relaunched easily in 2008.

After another three years, I merged Visionary with the business owned by my partner, Craig. We were doing events, weddings (I had also acquired an event-/wedding-hire business), marketing and ebusiness. We had stuff going on everywhere. We were running wedding expos and had been approached to run a baby expo. I had a pool of casual staff and also employed a wedding coordinator. It was crazy-busy and I was loving it.

I had a great exercise routine. I was building a network on the southern-Victorian coast, as our plan was to relocate there after my stepson, who was 15 at the time, finished school. I was out of the house from 7am-ish and walking back in the door around 6pm, having dinner and then hopping back onto the laptop – big days, and it was OK.

Life was great. Business was growing. And yet... I felt that I was missing something. I was looking for change, a challenge. I was starting to question why I was doing what I was doing.

### **And along came baby...**

Craig and I had had an amazingly busy week, with two nights out of town – three events on. We went to a dinner we were sponsoring and I had some champagne. I remember going to the toilet and feeling the room spin, and feeling weird on the inside. Those feelings passed. We finished the dinner and went home to continue our week.

However, as the week began, I slowly started to lose energy. I felt sick. I stopped drinking wine. Then coffee. I was running on empty. I tried to make an appointment with my doctor but the next available opening was

two weeks away. I thought I was dying. I was then told by two beautiful people in my life that I was pregnant. I laughed. I was on the pill. My head started ticking over. I bought a pregnancy test. Yep – we were going to have a baby!

### **Our unexpected gift.**

I had to double-check the pregnancy test – it was definitely positive. I then had to tell Craig. We both sat in stunned silence. He had been through all of this baby stuff before and was not looking forward to it; he understood that we did not have family support and that this would make it much harder. I could think about nothing more than the little life that was already growing inside me. A baby had not been in the plan for us. Ever. Yet, here we were, going to be parents, together. I felt excitement and then fear. I was excited at growing a little person, thinking of all the adventures we would have. I thought of everything I could show her and teach her. However, I was fearful about giving birth. I could think of nothing as terrifying as giving birth. At that time, I did not consider any other impacts that a baby would have on my life – least of all the impact on my business. I was heading into the unexpected and I took a “she’ll be right attitude” with me.

My morning sickness finally passed and my energy came back – my second trimester and the start of the third trimester were amazingly productive times for me. I focused on the birth of my baby and on buying things for her nursery. People told me that babies fed, slept and pooped and that she would be easily slotted underneath my desk so that I could carry on as usual. Some laughed at this notion and tried to tell me differently. I carried on blindly. I wish I hadn’t.

I wish I had the knowledge that I have today. This is why I have created *When Business Meets Baby* – so that you can realise that what’s going on in your world is normal and that others have been where you are, too. You

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can learn from us and discover our practical tools and tips for balancing business and baby.

### **Eat, sleep, poop**

Soon I had to face my fear – giving birth – but I did not do it alone; I ensured that I had a wonderful support team around me. The birth I had was empowered and strong, and it ended with an emergency c-section. (I talk about that in the chapter called “The Big Shift”.)

I really struggled with both breastfeeding and sleeping. I just didn’t enjoy breastfeeding – it bloody hurt and it took all of my energy! I solved that issue by moving to formula. Sophie would have fed all day if I had let her (she still grazes, to this day). In regards to the sleeping problem, my cherub slept – in my arms, for 40 minutes to the dot after screaming for 20 minutes. She also pooped... oh, did she poop! So, they were right. Babies eat, sleep and poop, plus mine screamed and wanted to be near me – all the time!

However, there was so much that they didn’t tell me, such as how much more washing there would be. The sleep deprivation – oh my! The hours and hours of sitting on the couch, feeding, holding a sleeping baby, trying to keep on top of emails and work. How my friendships would change. How I would suffer grief all over again by appreciating how much my mum had given to me and missing having someone I could have an honest and open chat with about “baby stuff”. How at this time, like no other time in my life, I would feel like I was always living in a pressure cooker.

I also wasn’t prepared for the amazing love that I would have for this little person. How she would completely and totally change the way I thought about life and business. I would go on a journey of change and upheaval, constantly looking for balance and true purpose – over five years later, I am still seeking these, although I’ve made significant changes and decisions to get closer to living the life that I want.

## **The search for domestic bliss**

Ever since Sophie was born, I have spent time looking for balance in our domestic life, putting into place systems to make running the house easier. When our washing machine blew up I bought a bigger one (I highly recommend having a big machine). Recently I bought a new, bigger washing basket. Suddenly the washing seems under control – well, the basket doesn't overflow. I created a “control centre” for the house, and a joint family electronic calendar. I plan meals, shop regularly, purchase fresh goods and try to bake. Now that Sophie has started school and needs to take lunches these habits have really paid off!

I also realised that having a house cleaner would free up my time and energy, so I tried hiring a cleaner... and then another, and another. A great cleaner left us, we went without a cleaner for a while, and now we have another great cleaner. I think that finding a good cleaner is a universal problem. I have taken to leaving notes for my current cleaner – doing this gives you the chance to develop your people-management and assertiveness skills!

We have never had family support for regular babysitting or childcare, so we have always had to pay for this. Our first babysitter joined us when Sophie was about five months old, and she came in for two half-days each week. This gave me time to be focused and do some work. When she was 10 months old, we put Sophie in childcare for two days a week, and we had a babysitter for one day a week. On the remaining two days, Craig looked after her for one day and I the other. Then Craig started full-time in the business again and our babysitter went to two days a week. Sophie then attended childcare and kinder (preschool) for three or four days a week over two years, and she started school this year. I've gradually been able to increase the amount of time that I can spend in the business or in part-time employment.

## **Trying to do it all**

After Sophie was born, I spent two years operating in a pressure cooker when it came to my business. I was trying to delegate work to people, and was finding the time spent managing and supporting them was just as much as if I'd actually done the work myself. I ran our last wedding expo and pulled the expo/event arm from our business. I just could not keep coping on no sleep. It meant the loss of a job for three staff, but I had to do it for myself. I also wound down our wedding-hire business and put it on the market. Within a year, this part of the business was no longer operating and most of the stock had been sold.

I turned my focus to marketing – digital marketing, specifically, and also set about creating a range of automated products. Then, because I had a credit-card debt that I needed to get under control, I decided to take on a part-time, one-year contract in the digital marketing space. As had happened earlier in Visionary's life cycle, many aspects of the business were shelved while I went back to working for an employer.

Fast forward nine months and Craig headed out to work full-time. I've recently completed a six-month contract and I'm back to working nearly full-time (school hours) in Visionary. My plan is to maintain and expand Visionary in areas in which it is already successful. However, we also have other plans for new businesses (utilising our online and marketing skills), and it seems a good time to explore those – that is for another book!

If at the time of Sophie's birth I had known what I know now, I am positive that I would have made hard decisions sooner and more proactively, rather than being reactive. However, I needed this life journey in order to get closer to doing what it is I should be doing. I'd love for you to learn from my mistakes, and from the wisdom of the other "mums-who've-been-there" in this book, but it's likely that you'll still have your own lessons to learn, and that you, too, may look back in regret over some issues. And that's

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perfectly OK. Just take the advice that resonates with you now, and trust in the journey. Right now, I have to be the best mum I can be to my little girl. I have to generate income streams for today and tomorrow to give my daughter the best start in life and to leave her a legacy.

### **Sharing is caring**

This book has been created just for you. Within its pages, I explore the areas of my life that created stress and gave me anxiety, and I share my discoveries. Although it features my story, *When Business Meets Baby* also contains wisdom from a team of women and men who are keen to share their experiences and insights with you.

We all have our own stories, but, as business mums, we face similar issues – it doesn't matter what size or type of business we have or where we come from. We can choose to grow from our business-meets-baby experience – personally, in business and as a mother. I encourage you to share your story, your learnings and your insights with other business mums so that we can support each other to find balance. When we do so, it's not just the mums who benefit. The big result is that our children grow up being happy and connected to their parents, and to the world in which they live.