**The Stalking Tiger.**

It occurred to me, after writing my last blog, that not everybody wants to work in a large company, I don’t anymore and after years in industry transited to working for myself providing consulting services. Tigers are solitary hunters, and this might be a characteristic that could suit you.

In my third blog in this series I suggested: “be a lion tamer, it’s safer, but then again, independence is the new, new thing.” I started on my own a few years back not because I was afraid of business success, I have had that, but because success to me means being able to get what needs to be done on my own. If I must hire people to support me, then it’s not only a failure but also the type of company I don’t want to run anymore.

Here are here critical questions that you must answer honestly about working for yourself:

* Have you the temperament to do it?
* Do you have the contacts and support required to survive in the short and medium term when most independents fail?
* Do you have the right skill sets to be successful in the long term?

There are lots of other criteria to base your decision on, but the above are the three pillars of success for an independent consultant.

The key learning points of being an independent are:

* There will be more competitors but also more opportunities; many companies outsource and contract non-critical work.
* Technology will rule, whether you like it or not, so get IT literate quick!
* We are in an era of shorter client contracts so expect to spend more time sourcing and winning business…
* Guard your intellectual property; it is literally your business!
* Multi-Tasking is the norm, be prepared to take on different types of business.

Veteran Tigers can make a vast contribution working as an independent by passing on knowledge, experience and the expertise of our time to help educate the next generation. Do this, and your stock and recognition will increase, you will also receive a great deal of personal satisfaction. Know that it is part of the marketing process, for independents everything you do is a part of marketing yourself.

It can be that the by-product of success as a one-man-band is not the growth of a company but increased freedom, such as, the freedom to choose what to do next.

We have all been ingrained with the idea of what success should look like: working the maximum hours possible, hiring employees and spending time managing them. I know many people who have resigned from unpleasant nine to five jobs to become their own boss because they didn’t like the way their company operated, but then they don’t change anything about the way they work when it's their company.

People believe that they need to model their routine on other businesses or following the mantra of some random “expert” on the internet blogging about what a successful business looks like as if there is only one version!

I suggest that that key to a more productive and more fulfilling career might not be to create and scale a new startup, but rather, to be able to work for yourself, determine your working hours, and become a profitable and sustainable company of one. It could be for you that the better and smarter solution is merely to remain small and question growth?

Business, like life, does not always follow quantitative data and studies. The assumption is that hard work and smart thinking, for example, always result in business growth and growth is related to success. But the opposite is often true, growth is not necessarily beneficial and can reduce your ability to stay in business long term. Over 70% of start-ups fail not because of competition or lousy business plans, but because they scaled up too quickly. Growth, as a primary focus is a dangerous business strategy and an entirely harmful one. Putting an increase in size over profit is the downfall of many.

**Are you a better Doer or Delegator?**

Working for myself means that I can build my business around my life. As the purpose of my work is not about infinite growth, I don’t have to worry about it. Instead, I focus on maximising the work I do and the revenue I generate in a way that covers my needs. I choose the pace that suits my sanity, and not the frenzy that is required to support overheads and salaries. I take care of all the services I provide, also sales, marketing, support, office management and everything else in between. It might be easier to offload some of those things however some of the tasks are highly creative and can be challenging even the boring stuff, some are not, I don’t mind… Being creative thrives on constraints and being a lone Tiger is a constraint that may suit many. However, the bigger picture is that I like where my business is at. To be clear, I do occasionally hire freelancers on a case by case basis. So, no HR red tape, no responsibility, I only hire people I don’t have to manage – we work together equally to the agreed project terms.

It's your company, so you get to make the decisions, one of them is the ability to continue to do the work you enjoy, and you get to define what’s important. Maybe growth, hiring a team and dividing up the job is essential to you, perhaps it is not. If it's not, then it is possible that growth at all costs in all directions is not for you either. It's your business, and you can stop doing the stuff you don’t like.

**Building a Company of One.**

It is exciting to hunt in the jungle to see what you can capture as a solitary stalking Tiger: how far things can go or how far is too far. I enjoy that people procure services from me; they are buying from me from just me. I create, I deliver and support it. So, I prefer a business I can run myself sustainably and enjoy doing. I would rather have fewer clients and know that I can easily fully support them through the services they have purchased from me, this may also be true of you as well.

It is possible to be an independent and stay small, singular and be successful, but you must define your success metrics because it's probably not what others tell you it can be.

I am not that bothered about growth; it is not required for profit or long-term resilience. I would rather be a stalking Tiger!