

1. Our background and why we started our business.

The business started in 2000 as a partnership in the name - ITE Services.

Bruce was an Industrial Arts teacher of over 20 years service working in a catholic high school in Tweed Heads NSW. Deborah was a financial planner with 15 yrs experience running her own financial planning company in Currumbin QLD.

Deborah noticed the immense amount of time, energy and professionalism that Bruce placed on the production of his own teaching resources, in particular in his area of speciality – Workplace Health and Safety.

Deborah suggested that we could use Bruce's desktop publishing and multimedia skills to market these WH&S resources to school workshop teachers across NSW. The motivation to start this new business was borne out of a need by Bruce to improve his economic status after his recent divorce.

We bought a school fax list from a third party company, then using a bulk fax broadcast software program, started to advertise our new product. The response was enormous. As orders were placed we burnt CDs with the resources and posted off to schools. In the early days the process was very manual and time consuming. The whole process – marketing, invoicing, design, production and delivery were all carried out by the two partners in the evenings and on weekends.

2. Why we chose this business.

Opportunity.

No school system, government or private were producing classroom resources to assist workshop teachers deliver and manage their mandatory WH&S training.

Knowledge of the Market.

We understood the curriculum and WH&S needs of industrial technology and engineering workshop teachers in Australian high schools.

Competition.

No other organisation or business have attempted to produce WH&S and workshop equipment specific resources suitable for delivery to school aged teenagers.

3. Our most difficult challenge and how we overcame it.

The most difficult challenge was for Bruce to resolve his struggle to handle two full time roles. Firstly a teacher 8.30am – 4.30pm each day and secondly, Director and product designer of OnGuard Safety Training. Bruce found it difficult to get out of 'teacher' mode and into 'business' mode. To overcome this struggle Bruce resigned from his teaching profession after 30 years service and he enrolled in a business course initiated by the AusIndustry 'Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business Program'.

4. Our greatest business achievement.

Our greatest business success has been to be nominated for a national WH&S safety award. In 2006, a large client of ours – Parramatta Catholic Education Diocese, was entered into the National Safety Council of Australia's annual awards.

They insisted that we also be nominated because of the benefits they experienced by implementing our OnGuard Safety Training Program into all of their high schools and requested a joint submission.

We were joint winners of the 2006 NSCA Telstra National Safety Award for Best OHS Training Program.

5. The best business advice we received.

We were fortunate to be accepted into the 'Mentoring for Growth Program' and attended a panel meeting at the Australian Trade Commission offices on the Gold Coast. At this meeting the ex Managing Director of Driza-bone John Maguire gave advice to Bruce. He suggested he forget teaching altogether, and drop his 'evangelistic' mentality to OH&S in schools – because the 'real' world is not interested in OH&S culture – they are only interested in OH&S if it was going to cause them some grief or cost them money. He also indicated that our program was too cheap, and if we doubled our price – our sales would increase. We have acted on John's advice.

6. What we would change to make our business stronger.

We would welcome the public acknowledgement of our efforts by the different state government education departments across Australia. The benefits that our resources have made to the delivery and education of WH&S to school aged children, including a shift in 'safety awareness and culture', are numerous and rewarding.

7. Technology and communications we use in our business.

We are a technology rich business. Each of our employees work at PC workstations utilising our Telstra Bigpond Cable internet. We use this bandwidth to use a VOIP telephone system. Our products are delivered online as a 'Software as a Service' platform by using a 'dedicated server' in Sydney.

8. Where do we see our business in 17 years?

Our business will be used in high schools from all state and private education systems across Australia. We are positioning ourselves to expand our position to be the "benchmark" in OH&S training in this sector. Then we aim to repeat this into the light engineering sector.

We see the integration of our program into the TAFE Australian Quality Training Framework. (AQTF)

Our program has already gained significant interest from countries aiming to improve their post school skills training programs. These countries have included: South Africa, India, Chile, Hong Kong and China. We see a very bright and busy future with numerous overseas markets.

9. Challenges created by the global financial crisis and its impact on our business.

Thankfully our business has not been affected by the current economic conditions. The opposite might be cited – as the federal government has pledged large sums of money to the education sector to enhance schools' IT capabilities. Our product is software.

Secondly, our product and our service is based on 'duty of care'. Irrespective of the economic environment, schools and TAFE's can not afford to 'cut back' on spending initiatives that impact on the safety, health and well being of their student population.

Our business has continued to grow, and grow at a substantial rate.

10. Why our business is unique?

We believe we are a unique business at FOUR levels:

1. We offer a product in a market that no one else has bothered to invest.

We are educating young people in workplace safety – in real time. NOT learning about workplace safety, they are participating in a school based workplace safety training program. They are being instructed in the safe operating procedures of potentially harmful machines and equipment. The safety training and the safety aware culture they will transfer to their future workplace is immeasurable – already statistics in school workshop reportable incident rates has dropped substantially. In some Australian country regions we have been told that employers are asking students from local schools seeking work to view their OnGuard Safety Certificates. We are very proud of this fact!

2. We are innovative.

No private or government organisation produces the specific training resources that we do. WE DO NOT HAVE A MARKET COMPETITOR!

3. We are growing.

Australia – we continue to develop our penetration in the Australian educational market We are positioning ourselves to expand our position to be the "benchmark" in OH&S training in the sector. Then we aim to repeat this into the light engineering sector.

Overseas - We have connected with the AusTrade TradeStart Program. To date, through this program we have had meetings with AusTrade BDMS from Mauritius, South Africa, Japan, China, India and Chile. As well have joined a trade mission with the Gold Coast City Council to Hong Kong and China. These meetings have established a board list of contacts who are interested in this type of training, particularly the government meetings that we held in China.

3. We employ staff from specific programs.

We employ staff from programs designed to train school leavers (school based trainees) or employ persons with unfortunate employment histories (back to work programs) To date we have signed up and trained FOUR school based trainees (Alex, Daniel, Sam, Jamie-lee). We have employed FIVE back to work employees (Trevor, Gary, Charmaine, Kylie, Daniel).

We are currently employing Matthew in a Cert IV IT traineeship. Then we have Kathy, a work experience - return to work mother. We pride ourselves in offering employment opportunities to young and 'not so young' people in our local community.