Wine Australia

AUSTRALIAN Grape & Wine

Australian Wine Industry Gender Equity Toolkit

CASE STUDY

Why flexible recruiting made sense for a small but growing business

Cameron Mackenzie, Distiller and Owner, Yarra Valley, VIC

People shouldn't be afraid to start families and businesses. Parenting is not going away.

It was a logical step for our business to employ women and provide access to flexible work. We were growing and when you're a young business, you can't really justify full time roles. There is this pool of highly professional, experienced women out there that are re-entering the workforce and require flexible working hours. It's not restricted to women; there were a couple of stay-at-home dads that joined our business too.

A lot of small businesses probably feel they can't afford people in certain roles, can't justify the role. They're probably right in terms of a full-time role, but they might be able to manage one or two days. Smaller and mid-tier businesses have an amazing opportunity to recruit flexibly. If you've got the opportunity to get professional, part-time staff and allow them to grow into the role alongside your business, it's a great opportunity.

Our business grew rapidly, and we really wanted to concentrate on growing the business and doing the right thing. The easiest way to do that is to have good people around you who feel safe and trusted. When you're in an organisation that doesn't have much goodwill, people are hesitant to go the extra mile.

Flexible work philosophy

Flexible work is nothing more than a fantastic opportunity, particularly for businesses that are growing, to think outside the square and split roles.

Giving people flexibility to do their job, whether it's from home or reduced hours, or job sharing, means they go the extra yard. If people need time off, if people need to work from home, or job share, I make it happen, it's the sensible thing to do.

We've always put our team first. Having worked in businesses that weren't flexible, I found it easier to just be flexible and concentrate on the business. Tracking people's hours just never really occurred to me.



Business benefits and outcomes

Flexibility attracts good staff because word gets out. It sends a great message across your team that the business is a positive environment to work in.

One woman who joined us had previously worked in the industry. Fast forward 12 years and she's now our director of operations. She just needed to get a foot back in the door. As she got more time as her kids grew, she was willing to take on more and more responsibility.

If your business is growing and you've got the opportunity to hire two strong part-time professional women who are re-entering the workforce, you've effectively reduced recruitment costs. You've got two people that want to grow in those roles. Most professionals want to grow. And you retain good staff.

Our output was far better. Productivity was extreme. We were expanding into new markets, growing domestically. People pay it forward. Other people contact you saying, "Listen, if anything pops up, can you consider me for a role?" So, you build a bit of a war chest of amazing people along the way.

If I was starting a business again, I would do the same thing. I see nothing but a huge asset in flexibility of staff and flexible working teams. It's a great opportunity for any small business.