

# DELIVERING BUSINESS ADVICE AND MENTORSHIP

*Joanne Walters established Top End Services in April this year to help businesses during these difficult Covid-19 times.*



“I’d just finished a three-year contract assisting small businesses and was enjoying a couple of months break with my boys when Covid-19 struck,” she says. “Many businesses I’d previously assisted began contacting me.”

Joanne was helping them voluntarily when the Territory Government consultants list opened. As a Northern Territory Government approved consultant, she’s now able to provide subsidised business advice and assistance for qualifying businesses.

Top End Services is a multi-faceted broad-range consultancy service. From established tourism operations, assisting new businesses grow and nurturing the next generation of potential business owners, Joanne has the knowledge, experience and vision to do it all.

“Having worked around tourism most of my life, I have in-depth knowledge and operational understanding of the industry.”

Joanne’s parents owned a bus operation in Queensland, and for 13 years she was an international Qantas flight attendant. She is fluent in Japanese, so Japan was her major route.

Afterwards her and husband, Sam, operated a series of bed and breakfasts across south-east Queensland before being enticed to take over the running of Katherine’s Beagle Motor Inn in 2012.

On arrival, they discovered it was sadly neglected, had the worst reputation in town and only six bookings scribbled on a piece of paper.

“There was no branding, no website or budget. It was disheartening,” she says. “The only thing we could do was offer old-fashioned good customer service and cleanliness.”

Within three months they’d changed the locals’ perception and were attracting tourists, making them No 1 on TripAdvisor within five months.

“This was because we approached the business with an owner’s mindset, not an employee’s,” Joanne says. “We worked on the business, not just in it. There is so much you can do yourself. While we made massive changes in a short time, we did little bits each day.

“It’s the basics that are key to success – cash flow management, marketing analysis and customer culture.”

By year’s end, the Beagle Motor Inn was a highly profitable business that compounded over the following two years. In 2014, they were a finalist in the Telstra Business Awards, and Joanne was winner of the Outstanding Contribution by an Employee in the Brolgas.

She was a judge for the Telstra Business Awards and Telstra Business Women’s Awards in 2019 and 2020.

Her other passion is working with children, seeing them grow into

their potential. As chair of Kids Can Inc, she ran a youth program during October Business Month in 2018 that explored youth confidence and opened their entrepreneurial minds.

Joanne’s most important messages are: never stop thinking outside the box; try things on a small scale first and don’t be afraid to change direction; and never discount looking after that one customer – you never know where it will lead you. **TQ**

## CONTACT

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