

# Building a Better Future — For You and Your Business

USING TWO DECADES OF EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, JASON FURNESS – OWNER AND BUSINESS COACH FOR CASH FOCUSED COACHING – IS TRAINING PROFESSIONALS TO EXPLOSIVELY BUILD BETTER BUSINESSES WHILE INVESTING IN THEIR OWN FUTURE. AUSTRALIA'S BEST DELVES INTO THE CAREER, BUSINESS PLANS AND LIFE OF ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL MANUFACTURING ENTREPRENEURS.

## The Man

With his original pursuit of an engineering degree sparked by a childhood fascination with LEGO and building model aircraft, Jason Furness began his education by initially studying engineering at Adelaide University. He later completed his MBA through La Trobe University in Victoria.

During his time of study at Adelaide, Jason was lucky enough to gain work experience with Holden – and it was here that he realised the path he truly wanted to take within this field. “Seeing the massively complex and powerful system of people and machinery that produced a car every 45 seconds was simply inspiring,” comments Jason. “This work experience led me to secure my first job out of university with Holden – in its plastic plant. I was working on introducing the equipment for the tail-lights and back panel for the VP Commodore. Vehicle pilots (trials) at a car plant are an extremely exciting time and a great way for a person to learn the business in a very practical and hands-on sense.”

When beginning at Holden, Jason was incredibly fortunate to learn from a great bunch of people who were working there already. “Some of my managers, the maintenance guys, engineers, and supervisors I first worked with, a number of the shop-floor people, and the shop stewards, all had their own thoughts and experiences that they shared with me,” he comments. “I made a lot of mistakes, got a lot of things right, and learnt from the whole experience.”

Taking on larger and larger roles, Jason threw himself into each and every task, focusing on delivering a positive and quick result. “Holden had come out of the dark

days of the mid-80s when it was really struggling financially and the culture was very results focused,” Jason mentions. “This focus suited me perfectly, and I thrived on the challenges.”

By age 29, Jason was the youngest executive within the Asia-Pacific region – a title that, in itself, brought challenges. “At the time, I had just taken over running the largest grey-iron foundry in the Southern Hemisphere,” Jason mentions. “We had significant safety issues, our quality wasn’t up to scratch, and we were about six weeks behind schedule in shipping engine blocks to Isuzu in Japan. As we were producing 3,000 blocks a day, these were sizeable issues.” People were upfront because of his age, asking ‘Is he old enough to handle this?’ However, Jason preferred to have his performance decide the issue, working with the motto ‘Head down, backside up’ to get the job done.

Jason’s first overseas trip was to spend three months in the United States working for General Motors, travelling the country visiting different plants and research and development organisations every week. “Travelling abroad gave me an incredible overview of where we sit in Australia in terms of manufacturing skills,” says Jason. “My travels and experiences in Japan have been critical in helping me develop my approach to remaining practically focused on making improvements. Seeing how quick and low-cost changes can flow through to the bottom line is fundamental to my philosophy.”

Jason recalls two defining moments he experienced while travelling overseas that influenced his approach to business. “In 1993, I was privileged enough to visit a Honda car plant in Marysville, Ohio,” Jason

recalls. “What made this trip special was that I saw how they had taken quality and reliability to such levels that almost totally eliminated inventory from parts of their business. They were injection moulding a large dashboard right next to the actual assembly line where it was fitted into the car. This set a benchmark in my mind for what is possible.”

By far, Jason’s most influential overseas experience was seeing the slums in Detroit, also in 1993. “My personal take on this was that when business fails, we see society fail. The negative impact of the auto industry’s problems flowed through into the wider society and all of the families in those areas. As a business leader, it is our role to ensure that our business is successful.”

Through travels and a plethora of experiences and lessons learnt, Jason began to understand and satisfy the conflicting points of views of suppliers, shareholders, financiers, managers, employees and the end customer. “I learnt how to work with customers and provide them outstanding levels of service. I learnt how to develop new factories from a pile of dirt and, at the same time, how to work across different time zones, languages and cultures from people around the world.”

Jason has seen the benefits of putting in the ‘hard yards’ early on in his career. Throughout his time, working for twenty-four hours straight during critical times was not unknown, and working for at least thirty days in a row was something that happened mostly every year. “There is an old saying that goes ‘The harder I work, the luckier I get’,” Jason mentions. “My experience has always been that when you put in the effort, opportunities seem to arise. When I am being slack, it is a regular

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*- Jason Furness*

occurrence that things appear to be far more difficult. The skills and insights from the last two decades have really come as a result of putting in massive efforts. The challenge is now to keep developing and applying those skills.”

Over the years, Jason has witnessed many changes within manufacturing and believes that the industry has changed in two main ways. “Increased competition has raised the bar for business leaders to change and improve their total business system,” Jason states. “We have to be in tune with what our customers’ problems are, and then work to solve them in a profitable fashion for both of us.”

Another large change that has transpired over this time is the globalisation of the industry. “This has massively changed the supply-chain footprint, which brings great business opportunities for people who can respond very rapidly to changes in the market. We took advantage of this in my time at Electrolux.”

### The Entrepreneur

During his career, Jason had a plethora of mentor figures and coaches that influenced his approach to business, the manufacturing industry, and life itself. It was realising the influential role that these figures played in creating the person he is today that first sparked the concept behind Cash Focused Coaching. “I have had a coach for the last four years, and these days I have a number of coaches,” says

Jason. “I had great results and realised that a lot of what a leader’s role is about is coaching. I trained as a coach and tested out my skills inside Electrolux where I was working at the time.” Opening a business is often faced with many challenges, for which Jason has the following tips:

**Be prepared:** Have a logical plan that covers all possible scenarios. This technique is one used right throughout the Cash Focused Coaching program.

**Have a reserve of cash:** This will allow new business owners to cope with any downside of financial projections.

**Apply an effective marketing plan:** Business is all about sales and marketing. Without these vital components, a business will never meet its full potential.

**Combining his experience at the coalface of the industry with the best sales and marketing methods he has come across,** Jason delivers a fully integrated end-to-end business profit explosion program. The goal of this program is to show business leaders and owners how to build their business to have the life they deserve. “This is my flagship program – one that is centred on being very clear as to what the purpose of a business is. The goal of all activities is to generate a massive lift in the profits from your business, and be able to deliver the service to your clients.”

This coaching is generating real results, as can be seen from the plethora of testimonials from clients. Companies

believe that Jason has helped them improve their business performance quickly and easily. “As my clients gain a different perspective on their businesses, the conversation really opens up about what the possibilities are to really grow and develop,” he says. “This type of conversation is usually more energetic for the client. As individuals, people have grown and created new challenges for themselves both professionally and personally; people have been promoted, tried new business ideas, changed their lives, lost weight, and led themselves to a more rewarding life.”

For a business with a turnover of less than \$750,000 per annum, the size of the investment for one-on-one coaching can be a significant part of the company’s cost structure. Larger businesses can usually afford one-on-one coaching for some key leaders, but wide exposure of their developing talent is not always affordable either.

Jason has a coaching program called ‘Mastering Operations – Secrets from the Inner Circle’, which is focused purely on helping small businesses, and individuals within a larger business, get rapid results in improving their operations. The program consists of a monthly group teleconference that is specifically focused on how to improve one aspect of the operation. This group call is recorded for the client to review at any time in the future or replay to their colleagues. This program also includes a ‘call-in day’ where the client calls

a specific number and receives a twenty-minute one-on-one session with Jason on any topic they wish to discuss. “I sit by the phone all day and just take calls from clients – so if I am talking to another client, they need to try their luck again a short time later,” Jason mentions. “Clients of this program also receive emails and video recordings on specific operation improvement techniques for them to take and immediately apply to their business to generate profit improvements. This program is offered for a nine-month minimum period, and is priced at \$247 plus GST per month.”

For business leaders of manufacturing companies whose turnover exceeds \$750,000, and have more than eight employees, the stepping stone to one-on-one coaching is via a business assessment. The business leader completes an assessment of their business, and Jason completes a market research module for them based upon discussions with six of their customers and six of their suppliers. An analysis is then produced for the client to identify the profit potential for the organisation. If the business analysis does not identify a profit potential of at least ten times their investment in the analysis, the investment is refunded – and the client still receives the report and the briefing session to analyse the results.

Such confidence in a service is exciting to see within the industry today. Jason states, “I do not work with clients in a continual one-on-one unless both I and they are totally convinced that they have almost no option but to make more cash profits by working together. The business analysis allows both of us to make that assessment, and it provides the client with a roadmap for their journey to increased profits. I have had some really positive feedback. I strongly believe in accountability. If I am not accountable for selecting the right client and getting them a great result, then I am ethically very uncomfortable with keeping their money. This sort of guarantee also keeps me on the edge, and ensures I keep my performance standards right up so I am constantly at the peak of my game.”

Cash Focused Coaching is not only boosting the bottom line for companies all over Australia, but is also giving back to the community on a regular basis. “For contribution, one phrase says it all,” Jason states. “Give it back! We have donated ten per cent of our sales (not profit) to charity every month since the very beginning. For

just \$1,000, you can restock a medical clinic in a third-world country. We are helping change the quality of life of people that need our assistance the most.”

Obviously, now running his own business means Jason is also seeing the benefits. “The business is a vehicle for me and my family to achieve our lifestyle and life goals. I would like to be able to have the resources of time and money to travel to destinations on a list I have of ‘50 places to see before I die’. I want to do this with my wife, Rosalie, and our three boys. In terms of life goals, I want to help thousands of people realise and experience the idea that business doesn’t have to be a massive struggle, and that winning is actually much more fun. If your business is making money, things are much more relaxed – you are a safer business and you can have a more confident future.”



## Attention manufacturers: You can save \$\$\$\$\$

*Jason gave Australia's Best the inside scoop on how manufacturers can save in today's market.*

- Continually shorten the cash cycle from raw materials to finished goods delivered and paid for by the end user. Stop relying on sales forecasts – customers don't read them!
- Safety and quality – executed correctly, focusing on both these factors makes money. Executed bureaucratically, they can be costly and won't make a difference.
- Improving sales and marketing can truly and ethically deliver more value to a customer.

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