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DOLLARS & SENSE

YOU CAN'T TURN ON THE TELEVISION WITHOUT HEARING ABOUT THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS. IS IT ANY WONDER WE ARE ALL FEELING A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT OUR FINANCIAL FUTURES? WITH THIS IN MIND, ALL GRANT INVITED FOUR LOCAL LADIES FROM THE WORLD OF FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING OUT FOR DRINKS AND SHE WAS THRILLED TO LEARN THAT IT'S NOT ALL BAD NEWS AHEAD.

of industry. Talk, we chat with four warriors from the world of accounting and finance.

Lounging on a couch at Miss Ruby's Bar at the Sunshine Coast Function Centre in Caloundra with a glass of bubbles we find: Toni McCulloch from Accounting North, Martienne Feeth from Active Financial Answers, Fabe Kelly from What Women Want Wealth Creation and Jodie Thompson from PJT Accounting and Business Advisors.

I start our chat by getting a feel for the women and their varying backgrounds. Toni started with Accounting North 14 years ago, straight from university, and is now a partner in the firm which was named one of the 100 fastest growing companies by BRW last year.

Martienne, a partner in Active Financial Answers, came from the world of banking before moving to the Coast. She takes a spiritual and holistic approach to finance which is evident in her book, written with business partner Barbara Page, called Empowered Wealth Strategies.

Let me be clear - I'm no financial guru. Just ask my bank - I'm far from it. In fact, I am happy to admit I don't do numbers awfully well. Words - yes. Numbers - heck no!

So in this period of doom and gloom it was refreshing to meet a gaggle of women from the world of finance with smiles on their faces and a positive bound in their step. This issue

words all grant. photography gemine howard

While Fabe doesn't have formal training in accounting, she has the first-hand knowledge to expertly guide her clients through the superannuation and property investing maze through her company, What Women Want Wealth Creation.

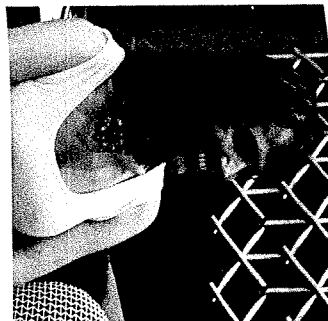
Jodie is a director with successful Kawana-based firm PJT Accounting and Business Advisors, a firm she co-founded more than four years ago.

These women are anything but your stereotypical accountants. They are articulate, well presented, full of life and clearly enjoy each other's company. So how did these women end up in the world of finance?

"I was always good at maths. Plus when I was planning my life, income and dollars had to come into it too," Jodie explains.

"I actually didn't have any exposure to accounting until my first year of uni. I did one accounting subject and stuck at it," Toni adds.

Like Jodie, Martienne always liked numbers. "Someone told me that accounting is the best foundation you can have in life, no matter what your passion is and they are right."



Fabe spent much of her career as a bookkeeper so working in finance was a natural progression, particularly once she started to learn about investing, know-how she happily shares at her seminars.

It's interesting to note all women have an investment portfolio, a mix of property and/or property and shares.

What about the financial downturn. Should businesses worry?

Jodie believes if a business has already invested in its policies, procedures and goals, they will weather the storm. "Reactive businesses may struggle and it's generally these businesses that coast along in the good times and don't prepare for the harder times."

Martienne agrees. "We are seeing our clients' cash flows becoming a little more strained as people are taking longer to pay, but it hasn't hit our business personally."

Toni suggests to her clients that it's a good time to review their business and take stock of their financial situation. "A lot of our clients are re-viewing their bills and re-negotiating their terms with suppliers, so it's working out well for them."

"People ask me about our seminars as they expect our numbers to have dropped but it's the opposite," Fabe says. "Women want to learn more than ever."

I ask the ladies for their advice on how best to weather the storm ahead.

"Panic is definitely driving the downturn so I suggest people don't buy into the frenzy. This is really a small hiccup in a long road so you need to find the right strategies for your business or you'll get stuck in the crisis. Also, don't overextend your credit, personally or in your business," Martienne suggests.

"As Toni said, it's a great time for small businesses to be reviewing their operations as a whole, keeping costs down but also keeping an eye on what drives their business to succeed in the good times," Jodie advises.

Fabe agrees and goes on to add, "It's important people take the time to work on the business rather than in the business."

It's clear these ladies are passionate about what they do and not just about using their knowledge for their own financial gain, but to help their clients achieve their long-term goals. I ask them what they love about their career.

"Being able to empower and inspire people to realise their dreams is so exciting," Martienne explains. "It's especially great if we can work on a strategic plan."

Toni adds, "I love the people and I love that I can share their experiences. I have formed so many solid friendships."

For Fabe, it's about education. "Equipping women with the knowledge to achieve their goals is why I'm in this business. The sky is the limit."

"I love working with my clients to achieve their goals. It's an amazing feeling when they get there as you become part of their family to a certain extent. I had a client almost beer hug me once. It all comes back to trust," Jodie says.

With this in mind, I would most definitely trust these women with my finances. They clearly have their financial heads screwed on the right way and they are happy to share their wisdom accordingly. ☺

Our financial gurus were guests of Miss Ruby's Bar at the Sunshine Coast Function Centre at Caloundra. In addition to providing a quiet spot for our chat, lounging on a couple of comfy couches, Miss Ruby's Bar kindly provided drinks (bubbles of course) and a tapas platter for the ladies to munch on. Part of the Caloundra RSL and the largest function and entertainment venue on the Sunshine Coast, Miss Ruby's Bar is perfect for cocktail parties, private parties and corporate functions.

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