

Annabelle Selleck, 46, owner of Good Pet Food Kitchen

Seeing a gap in the market for natural, fresh, nutritionally balanced pet food prompted Annabelle to serve up a solution

My business: Good Pet Food Kitchen is based on the belief that dogs deserve to eat healthy, nutritious food. We make our meals from real meat, eggs, sardines and vegetables soaked in bone broth and chicken stock. People notice the difference in their dogs almost immediately: their skin and coat look healthier, their eyes get clearer and their breath is better. We're also about to add meals for cats, as well as online sales and cooking classes.

How I got the idea: I worked in the veterinary industry for 11 years, first as a vet nurse then as a practice manager. I'd see young cats and dogs come in with illnesses that young animals just shouldn't be getting, like diabetes and cancer. I could see a gap in the market, because people wanted to feed their pets better and I wanted to provide an easy solution. I cut my job back to around 30 hours a week, then devoted another 30 hours to studying canine nutrition and working on the business, before taking a leap of faith and going full-time in December 2015.

Signs of success: We went into retail shops in February 2016 and now have about 16 outlets in Sydney, and two in Melbourne (goodpetfoodkitchen.com.au). It's been a quick growth, to the point where I had to stop taking on new outlets because we couldn't keep up with supply!

Perks of self-employment: The freedom of running my own business really suits my personality.

I'm a bit of a free spirit so I love being able to say 'Tools down, we're going surfing today.' People say I'm brave starting a business in my forties, but age isn't an issue to me. I feel like everything I've done previously is being put to good use within this business.

"Believe in what you're doing. If it's the right thing... your business will grow and take on an energy of its own"

Managing stress: I had so many pressing deadlines in 2016 and ended the year feeling burnt out. I promised myself I wouldn't let that happen in 2017, and so far I've been really good about taking time out. I work 60-80 hours most weeks, but I try to have one day out where I go surfing, do an ocean swim or yoga. I need that day to clear my mind so that new information can come in, and I'm prepared for the week ahead.

Advice for aspiring entrepreneurs: Believe in what you're doing. If it's the right thing for you and right for the community, your business will grow and take on an energy of its own, so be confident that what's in your heart can create a successful business. **P**

My self-care strategy: For me, physical health and fitness equates to mental wellbeing. I try to exercise five days a week, whether it's a sand run, taking my dog Gypsy to the park, or a gentle walk at the end of the day. I am guilty of sometimes grabbing vegemite toast on the run instead of a proper meal, but I try to have a green smoothie at least three or four days a week to balance things out. I also find that my mind is clearer if I don't drink during the week.

5 LESSONS FROM ANNABELLE

- 1 Use your knowledge of your industry to identify gaps in the market where customer needs aren't being met.
- 2 Invest in education: if you need to upskill in a certain area, set aside time and money for courses.
- 3 Think long-term. I was going to create a pet food cookbook, but decided products had more scope for providing an income.
- 4 Have a clear vision for your website that matches the vision for your brand.
- 5 Grow at a sustainable rate. Ensure your business is operating smoothly before you take on new clients.

HAIR & MAKEUP: LOLA DENNIS

Want to stop dreaming about your own business and start planning? Here's where you can go for some of the basics:

- ✓ **business.gov.au** offers simple and convenient access to all of the government information, assistance, forms and services you need.
- ✓ **ato.gov.au /Business/Starting-your-own-business** guides new businesses through tax requirements they need to consider.
- ✓ **asic.gov.au** outlines what is needed to register a business name.