

MEETING A NEW MARKET

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New business model providing better work options for professional women

A Perth-based marketing resources provider that aims to get women back into the workforce after having kids is looking to establish its presence over east, as its flexible business model continues to turn heads.

The Marketing Room provides in-house marketing staff to companies nationally — including in NSW and Queensland — across a wide range of industries including mining, manufacturing, property and luxury.

Horizon Energy, James Hardie, FFF Australia, Healthfreak Cafes and Tara Uniforms are among dozens of companies that have featured in its client book. It is also the preferred marketing partner for Macquarie Banks' virtual adviser network program.

The company was founded three years ago by Tahnee Sharp, who confessed the idea came from feeling restless at home with young kids and wanting to improve her skills.

"I still wanted to be doing something that felt important to me from a work-life balance perspective," she said.

The business has 18 managers in Perth. They are predominantly women who worked as high-level marketing professionals before having children. Contracted marketing managers work 25 hours each month — or about one day a week in the office — providing flexibility around raising families.

They have the option to scale up their workload if they wish.

The model is also offering a solution to critical skills shortages sweeping the economy, according to Ms Sharp, who said marketing managers' experience was matched to their clients' industry.

Making policy changes to boost women's participation in the workforce has been a key focus recently for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, which believes it could help alleviate labour market pressures. Ms Sharp said the fact no other model existed in the Australian market had been a "major drawback" when it came to building the business. She is looking to appoint staff to head teams in NSW and Queensland when COVID-19 border restrictions ease.

"All the people that are working for us, they've all been in a corporate environment, they've all got the skills," Ms Sharp said.

"To be able to be back in the corporate world on their terms is great, otherwise they'd be completely lost to the workforce . . . or they'd have to take a role that's lower than their ability and end up leaving because there's no job satisfaction.

"To keep that level of knowledge up and keep your corporate work life up is so important, especially for mums."

The company's group marketing director, Jane Jones, said the work-life balance was "like chalk and cheese" compared to her previous role working for an agency.

"It's been amazing to find an organisation that allows me to do exciting things and work with great clients and brands but also be at home for my kids when I need to be," the mum of two said.

Marketing manager Jessica Gibson said the work was "a breath of fresh air" following a corporate role where she was working while raising two kids under the age of three with a husband who worked remotely.

Her colleague Sharon Chalwell said she liked being able to "switch on and off" the workload depending on her family's needs, while marketing manager Fran Healy said the ability to work from home or at the client's premises was handy while juggling school hours.

Ms Sharp has also taken on a second business that is still in its infancy, The Social Room, which provides a similar service for companies looking for staff to run their social media.