

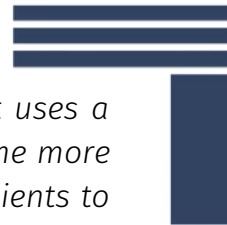


Blue Gnu finds fresh energy and clarity through improving strategy across the business

CEO Elaine Gosden and her team were so focused on delivering for their clients that Blue Gnu's business strategy became neglected. But with the help of Business Development Specialist Sarah Badcock, Elaine now has an eye across all areas of the business, and can attract the clients whose values and priorities align with her own.

Blue Gnu: the background story

Blue Gnu is a training and development provider that uses a bespoke approach to help teams and leaders to become more effective. Their core attitude centres on encouraging clients to adopt new practices throughout the whole organisation, bringing true value and growth.



"Since moving from annual to quarterly meetings, the results we see from working with Sarah have increased dramatically"

A strategic look at the business

CEO Elaine Gosden grew Blue Gnu from a one-man band to a team of 12. Like many a successful business owner she still loved to be hands on, delivering for her clients despite being the boss. With such passion for training and development, it was easy for her to get caught up in the 'doing' rather than taking a step back to manage the business.

Elaine realised the bigger picture wasn't being addressed, so she brought Business Development Specialist Sarah Badcock on board to help take things in hand. At the heart of the support Sarah gave was an initial deep-dive strategy session, followed by regular quarterly reviews to look at what needed to be improved across the business. From marketing strategy to figures, goals and values, Sarah left no stone unturned in helping Elaine develop the Blue Gnu business.

A process of improvement

Sarah's approach to helping Elaine develop the Blue Gnu business was to split the strategy into three key areas: brand awareness, engagement, maintaining relationships (including retention strategy). Each month, she and the leadership team work on at least one of the topics to develop their ideas and approach.

"Sarah gives us the opportunity to think creatively around the different aspects of running a business."

She helps us consider how we do things, to question how we could do them differently, and ask how to make the right investments," said Elaine.

The outcomes have been brilliant, with a variety of issues tackled across the business, Elaine explained. **"Sarah's input has led to us improving our business processes, for example, tightening up our procedures for getting contracts signed, asking for client feedback, and using our CRM fully.** Now we can make sure we're identifying and taking up opportunities for upselling, cross selling and retaining clients."

With Sarah's support, Elaine and her team have **found new energy and cohesion** in the Blue Gnu business. **"We all get very fired up because the strategies that she help us develop are such a good fit for us** – they feel so natural that we all wonder why weren't we doing them before! A session with Sarah makes us feel like we're all in this together, truly part of one team."

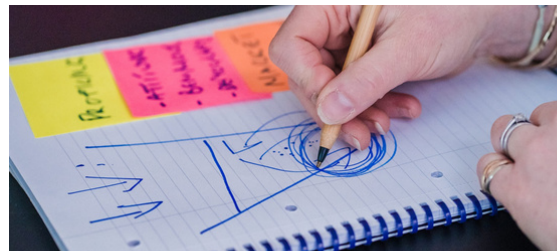
"We all wonder why weren't we doing them before!"

Challenging behaviour

One of the difficulties of being the boss is that staff members aren't always forthcoming in bringing alternative ideas. "As a senior person in the company, my team don't always feel comfortable challenging me directly, but **Sarah doesn't have that reluctance.** The opportunity to be asked directly why we do things a certain way is a huge positive, it means we establish the rationale for our practices and make changes when we find there's a better way to do things," Elaine said.

Working with Sarah brought an extra dimension to the discussions Elaine and her senior team had. **"Our reviews with Sarah are effectively like having coaching,"** Elaine explained. "Sarah asks us provocative questions which challenge our internal thinking. It's really healthy because working with the same people all the time can mean nothing's ever challenged, so it's much harder for the business to grow and meet its full potential."

Elaine found having her views and practices challenged refreshing: "Sarah has helped me to take a business-first approach that's **led to benefits I didn't expect,** like improved relations in our team. **Sarah is a tonic to my thinking,** encouraging me to tackle issues head on, whereas I've sometimes been prone to assuming they'll turn out alright."



An eye on the numbers

Elaine's core values are around building a business that brings joy and fulfilment, but profitability still has a place. Sarah worked with Blue Gnu to review numbers at each quarterly meeting, giving them a regular check-in to ensure they were on track to meet targets.

"Our financial reporting has improved significantly since working with Sarah because she's encouraged us to have our eye across more of the numbers more of the time," Elaine said.

Sarah's visits became a valuable opportunity for Elaine to bring together her Finance and Operations Director – husband, Toby Gosden – and Head of Marketing, Claire Trotman, so the four of them could get their heads together. The regular strategic meetings make space for Blue Gnu to examine what's worked well in the last few months, and to look at their performance against their targets.

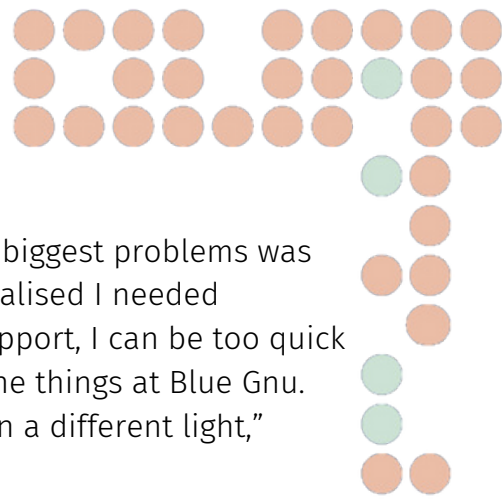
Marketing Marvel

Part of what Sarah has done for Blue Gnu is to look hard at the marketing strategy, asking the kinds of questions that a marketing director would ask. **"The improvements in marketing activity that Sarah helped us implement meant we won several big new contracts,"** Elaine said. "We get much better returns now, because Sarah helped us remember that the reward for good marketing is winning new business."

Sarah's support goes further than helping Elaine to make a plan: "It isn't just the strategy that she creates for us, but it's the accountability she brings, too. Sarah is on hand whenever we need help, which is fantastic."

"It's the accountability she brings, too."





Tackling the greatest obstacle

When it came to running Blue Gnu Elaine found that one of her biggest problems was herself. She was holding herself – and the business – back. “I realised I needed someone to help me get out of my own way. Without Sarah’s support, I can be too quick to dismiss ideas because they’re not the way we’ve typically done things at Blue Gnu. **Sarah brings a new perspective** that helps me consider things in a different light,” Elaine explained.

“It’s lonely at the top, so it’s nice to have someone else who is as emotionally invested as I am – it feels as though Sarah is a board member, challenging or supporting us wherever we need it.”

Elaine’s natural modesty had meant that she hadn’t celebrated the benefits of her business in the public eye, but Sarah has helped her to change that. “Sarah encourages me to do things out of my comfort zone, like entering industry awards,” Elaine said. “Never in a month of Sundays would I have thought of putting myself in for an award, because it felt too egotistical, but with Sarah’s encouragement I’m doing it anyway. Submitting our programmes for awards in the industry means we’ll be recognised as leaders in the training and development field.”

Running with the right herd

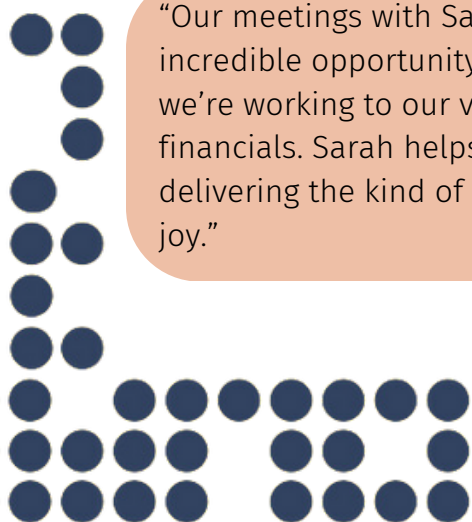
For Elaine, running a business is about working with the **right people** – the clients who view them as partners and take the development of their people seriously. “We’re cultivating Blue Gnu so we don’t work with clients who don’t take staff development seriously. Sarah’s support has meant that we now only work with businesses whose **values** on staff development **align** with our own.”

“Our meetings with Sarah have been an incredible opportunity to make sure we’re working to our values, not just our financials. Sarah helps us ensure we’re delivering the kind of work that brings us joy.”

Aligning the Blu Gnu team

With a commitment to building partnerships with only the highest quality clients, it was important that the entire staff and wider family of associates at Blue Gnu could get on board with the **vision**. Sarah helped Elaine share the **culture** and **values** with her team so everyone could be in alignment. A ‘Brilliant Basics’ document brought the company together into a tribe that makes the brand stronger.

“Sarah’s support has given us a more cohesive team where we all work together constructively – it brings abundance to our business and the people we work with,” said Elaine.



Pastures new

Elaine has found herself springing into action now that she has Sarah's support, finally making firm plans for a client event she'd been considering.

"With Sarah's energy and encouragement, we developed our ideas from giving our clients a nice treat, like a brunch, to a more enriching occasion where they will experience our work in a more meaningful way. As a result, our clients are more likely to deepen their engagement with us when it comes to their strategic people plans, because they'll have seen that we're more than a one-trick pony. Our clients will understand how they can weave our training into their organisation properly, so it's fully embedded and brings them greater value."

Sarah's support is tailored to the places where Blue Gnu need it.

"We're really excited to have Sarah's presence at our client event – she'll be an extra pair of ears for us, gathering insights that'll help us refine our marketing plans," said Elaine.



Hands-on and by their side

One of the joys of working with Sarah is the face-to-face meetings, Elaine says. “Rather marvellously, our quarterly strategic meetings happen in person. When you’re working with someone regularly, there’s nothing like a bit of skin time and human connection – it’s really important to me that Sarah comes to the office, because we get together with other key members of the team to review our progress and make plans.”

"When you're working with Sarah it doesn't actually feel like work."

“When you’re working with Sarah it doesn’t actually feel like work. She makes it really enjoyable. Although we only know each other professionally, it feels like having a friend round. Sarah really does give a shit about my business, so she gives her full attention. It means she’s proactive with her questions.”

Sarah has brought incredible value to Blue Gnu. “Every time I work with Sarah I feel like the business takes a few steps forward. Even if the direct sales will only come to fruition in the next few months, we're marketing our business more intelligently.”

“Since moving from annual to quarterly meetings, the results we see from working with Sarah have increased dramatically. Working with Sarah is such a good investment – we get incredible value for money from her, and her presence in our business is really motivating and energizing.”

*Looking for improvements across the board in your business?
Contact Sarah to discover how aligned values lead to growth
and fulfilment for your team and your clients.*

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