



WOMEN IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE ENTERPRISES

- WiRE SHOWCASE SERIES -

Jess Fealy

Entrepreneur - Back Paddock Business



"Be confident and have the courage to have a go. Don't overthink it, just get started. If you can get involved with a start-up or women's networking group, do that, because you will be amazed at how much you can learn."

ABOUT

Jess Fealy wears many hats. A qualified chartered accountant, Jess grew up on a dairy farm and is now a farm wife and mum of four, at Blue Sky Produce, a family owned and operated mango, avocado and lime orchard in Far North Queensland. Jess is also the founder of 'Back Paddock Business' which provides business and communications support to rural enterprises. She lives and breathes social media and believes there are real benefits to be gained from rural and remote businesses in the online space.

Jess works part-time as the Digital Media and Communications officer for her local council, and in her spare time she is a 'View from the Paddock' columnist for the Queensland Country Life newspaper and the Volunteer Blogging Team Director for 'Country to Canberra' www.countrytocanberra.com.au whose mission it is to empower young, rural women to reach their leadership potential. Jess is also a driving team member with Startup Tablelands <https://www.startuptablelands.org> whose mission it is to enable innovation and entrepreneurship in rural and remote communities.

In 2017 Jess was a RIRDC Rural Women's Award finalist for Queensland.

MEANING OF SUCCESS

- I'm an accountant so I'm always going to say the dollars are a big part of it, so to earn, to make a profit from what I'm doing is definitely important to me.
- Also, I have a desire to help my community and give back. So to choose those projects that allow that to happen, that help the community.
- Trying to get balance in my work and family life.

MINDSET

- Commitment. A big lesson I've learned in the last couple of years is it's easier to do something at 100% than it is at 98%. If I decide to take on a project, it is at 100%.

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR

- It's exciting. It's a challenge, it's not the same thing every day, and it's getting to work with different people on different projects.
- The ability to decide my own work and the people I'd like to meet.
- The research too, I love to read. I think as an entrepreneur running your own business you need to read widely, connect widely, and keep a handle on the different spaces.



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BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES

- I think the dollars and access to customers are two of the biggest barriers in rural areas. There doesn't seem to be the dollars in rural areas to spend on these support type industries, whether it's bookkeeping, or your social media, so it's a hard sell to get people to pay you for something they could do themselves, and pricing this service is tricky.
- In the rural areas you've got limited customers, and I haven't really got the answer to that yet but I think you have to think bigger and utilise the Internet and social media from the get-go.

SUCCESS FORMULA

- I do. I think there's a couple of key things. The first is to have a go, and to do that as quickly and with as minimal effort and money to get it started as soon as possible. I think that something I've really learnt is don't overthink it, just get started.
- Get some advice or connect with a group that can help you.

PARTNERSHIPS

- I think you have to be very careful with partnerships, to choose the people correctly.
- Personally, I haven't considered a partnership, but I would be open to it if I came across the right person.

MENTORS

- I really believe in the value of mentorship, but personally I haven't found a mentor for myself, and I would love to do that at some point. I just haven't gotten there yet.

BIGGEST LESSONS LEARNT

- There's a lot of value in the things you say 'no' to, not just necessarily the things you say 'yes' to. I think I'm like a lot of women where there's so much that is important to us, our communities, our jobs, our businesses, and we've very used to saying yes, yes, yes and I've done that to the detriment of my business, and my community work, and haven't delivered the standard I'm capable of and would want to produce, so I've learned in the last few months that saying 'no' to some things really benefits the things I've said 'yes' to.
- A big lesson I've learned in the last couple of years is its easy to do something at 100%, than it is at 98%.



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BEST ADVICE (SOCIAL MEDIA)

- For social media, my biggest tip is to look at where your customers are, look where your users are and focus on those first. Get a handle on Facebook, get a handle on Instagram and Twitter, then go looking for another social media tool. Personally, I read a lot, podcasts etc and keep up to speed this way.
- It's quite easy to Google. There's a few great websites like Social Media Examiner, things like that which highlight the trends that are happening in the social media space, so make use of those.

SOMETHING AMAZING TO CREATE OR IMPLEMENT CHANGE

- I would love to live in a community where the next Steve Jobs type enterprise was born in our rural community. I would love to feel that in some small way I was part of that process, and that I had a thriving business, and my neighbours had thriving businesses, and the mum's at school. We all know rural Australia is the best place to live, so if we could have awesome careers there too, that's golden.

CONTACT

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