



WOMEN IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE ENTERPRISES

- WiRE SHOWCASE SERIES -

Fiona Lake

Entrepreneur - Rural Photographer and Writer



"In business, people talk a lot about money and time and all these other things, but energy is probably the most valuable resource, so you have to be careful about where you put your energy. It's not a bottomless pit."

ABOUT

Fiona Lake is a professional photographer dedicated to explaining life in rural and remote areas. Since the first photograph sale in 1982, Fiona has developed a unique, multi-strand business to support this life-long advocacy. She began concerted efforts to not just 'preach to the converted' in 1992, with the printing of her first cattle station postcards - sold to tourists across northern outback Australia. To bring the bush to the heart of Urban Australia, she has held exhibitions in venues such as Sydney's Bondi Pavilion and the Sofitel Hotel in Collins Street, Melbourne. Fiona has written feature stories for R.M. Williams 'Outback' magazine since 1999, and thousands of her three books featuring Australia's largest cattle stations have been sold worldwide. The pioneering website Fiona launched in 2003 still receives first page rankings for many online searches returning millions of results, and it has been included in the National Library of Australia's 'Pandora' project - a permanent record of websites deemed to be cultural significance. Fiona was the first Australian appointed to the three-person panel judging the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists 'Start Prize for Photography'. Other career highlights include an ABC television 'Landline' feature, being invited to speak at the UK 'Farmers on Film' festival, and she is one of few artists to have had an exhibition opened by the Governor General of Australia (Major General Michael Jeffery). Fiona won this year's Qld Rural Press Club 'Rural Social Media' award.

Fiona has taken aerial photographs from choppers since 1988 and she is now a licenced drone pilot. Her work takes her across Australia and further afield, running workshops and public speaking, to pass on what she has learned. In August-September 2018 Fiona is leading a fabulous 'Paddock to Plate' farm tour to Ireland and the UK, with other tours to follow.

MEANING OF SUCCESS

- I don't think of it as financial success, but it's making something financial enough out of something you think will make a difference to the world. To marry the two, and to maintain that, that is a real challenge.
- My ability to adapt also, I feel pleased about that, because it has been tough adapting and changing and taking on new technologies, taking so many risks over my career.
- For me it is the ideas that keep coming, so once I have got something else done I am always looking for the next thing that I have not managed to conquer or complete yet, so I am always looking forward.



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FAVOURITE ASPECT OF BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR

- I love finding gaps, and I am always on the lookout for finding gaps.
- I have become increasingly interested in technology and what it can do for me.

OVERCOMING DOUBT

- Tenacity is something I probably have in spades, though that can be a two-edged sword because you have got to know also when to walk away from something. There have been times when I've been on the brink of giving up though, and something has come good. Quite often it has taken me years.
- You have to have incorrigible optimism.

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

- Tenacity, I have tenacity in spades.
- I do not think there is a single recipe though, everybody has to do what fits for them. Ultimately you do have to really care about what you do because that is what will keep you going when things are not going so well, when you get knocked back.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Partnerships are not really something I have been involved with but I have helped others in the form of collaborations with committees for conferences, but it boils down to personality I suppose. I tend to be very independent and I like my own way, but that's not to suggest that I don't compromise. You won't survive in business if you don't compromise, you can't negotiate, or agree to disagree and all those sorts of traits. You need to develop them if you don't have them to start with.

MENTORS

- I think you can often learn more from people working in other areas, or geographically as well, doing what you do but working in another country or in another industry.
- I haven't really had mentors as such, but I have had people who have helped me, in terms of encouragement, people who just encouraged me at the right time and introduced me to someone else. Some of these people may not even be aware of what a difference they made.



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BIGGEST LESSONS LEARNT

- Persistence has probably sprung to mind over the last year or so because there has been a few things that have come good that I have been plugging away on for years.
- You can get some good wins early on, but that won't continue unless you persist and are adaptable. Though it's got to be measured and thoughtful persistence. Obviously, you don't hang on to things where the writing's on the wall, and sometimes you give up a bit later than you should, but it's very difficult to know the precise time when you should give something up because sometimes I've been on the brink of saying goodbye to something and it has come back to life through unexpected sources.

SOMETHING AMAZING TO CREATE OR IMPLEMENT CHANGE

- One idea that I put on the backburner is exhibitions overseas. It's very expensive and you need funding. It's not the sort of project you could viably do on your own.
- Another project is the falling rate of Indigenous stockmen on cattle stations. I've been pursuing avenues to get this project off the ground over the last two years. It's something that's not discussed and I think the project I've got in mind could really make a difference.
- The third thing is getting a group of Australian rural women together and going overseas to rural women's conferences in other countries. I've got a second twitter account that promotes agricultural events, so I've got to know some of these events quite well, and I just think it would be a fantastic experience with the inter-country networking through agriculture, and for one, looking at resource like time and energy. I think energy is something that's probably so underestimated in business. People talk about money and time and all these other things, but energy probably is the resource that you can't buy, and you can't pay someone else to do it. It's probably the most valuable resource, so you do have to be careful about where you put your energy because it's not a bottomless pit.

CONTACT

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