

WOMEN IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE ENTERPRISES

- WiRE SHOWCASE SERIES -

Georgie Somerset

Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurial Leader Extraordinaire



"You're so much stronger than you could ever have imagined, but you have to choose to find that strength. You have to choose to be positive, you have to choose to believe in yourself."

ABOUT

A beef producer and rural leader with experience in agribusiness, marketing and regional development, Georgie Somerset's work involves identifying and advocating opportunities, resolving issues and creating linkages and networks across sectors.

Actively involved in beef production in Queensland's South Burnett and mother of three children, Georgie is vice-president of AgForce Queensland, on the board of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Children's Health Queensland, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Qld) and QRAA, while also chairing the Red Earth Community Foundation and being involved in various industry and community groups.

She has served on a range of state and national committees and was president of the Queensland Rural, Regional and Remote Women's Network. Her life combines cattle yards and board rooms, boarding school parenting and committee chairing, and long drives for short meetings.

Georgie founded an outback resort on the family property in 1985, and managed a branded beef product for nine family farms in the 1990s. She operated her own marketing consultancy from 1988 to the early 2000s, and has lived the entrepreneurial journey both through her own businesses and not for profits she has helped lead.

Georgie has taken these principals onto boards she serves on, applying strategic thinking and entrepreneurial collaboration to opportunities and challenges in large and small organisations. Working with several partner organisations, she helped establish the South Burnett Community Leadership Program, funded by a blend of private, public and philanthropic funds, and it continues to inspire Georgie as she sees community leaders gain skills and confidence in themselves.

She believes in life long learning and education, and is passionate about regional communities, agriculture and the many opportunities available. Mentoring others and ensuring there is support for their leadership and entrepreneurial journey is a priority for her.

Georgie knows that accessing information and influencing decision makers is still possible in a remote location if you make the effort to stay connected.

MINDSET

- I think mindset is absolutely critical. I was fortunate to grow up with parents who really did look on the bright side of life and taught that ethos as well. I do think you need to choose to find positives in each challenge.



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OVERCOMING DOUBT

- For me, prior to the internet, it was an incredible sense of isolation with the geographical isolation and managing that when you're self-employed and juggling a whole range of things, young children and that, but for me, staying at home sent me around the twist. So I think it's about understanding what you need, being comfortable, knowing that you are enough and you don't actually have to try to be anybody else. I think the sooner you get to the space where you do accept yourself and you do realise that you are an individual in how you do it, and how you choose to run your business and raise your children, be a partner, and be an entrepreneur, is ok. We don't have to live up to what other people's expectations are.

ENTREPRENEUR SKILLS

- I think marketing yourself is very important. Getting your own brand right, understanding what it is. I see so many opportunities missed, and it's not just the customer service and brochures, but it's the other part and when you see that being done really well and congruently through an organisation you really appreciate what the result can be.
- Also, thinking strategically, so getting out of the business and sitting back and saying what is it we're trying to do here, what's our financial targets, being really clear on the return on investment that you're wanting, and being honest with yourself, knowing what you're prepared to forgo to get to that.
- Stay on top of your records, and if you're not great at that, find someone who is.
- Communication and building teams with other people, your staff, your customers, people you are in business with, your community, whether that's your business community, or your community around you.

BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES

- The geographical isolation (pre-internet). I think one of the biggest challenges for rural women is this isolation, nobody to say 'gosh you look great today', or 'you did such a good job on that' 'thanks for doing that'. So, it's about building around you that supportive atmosphere. I think there's an issue around being appreciated, and feeling like what you're doing is being appreciated at a very base level, particularly if you're living on a property or running a small business, and really it's about that, all you need to be is the best 'you' you can be.

NETWORKING

- Most people work in a silo, even within an organisation or within a business, and certainly within communities. I try to link people together, if it strengthens what they're doing I think that's an enormous benefit. Sometimes you see some great synergies and opportunities come out of this.



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SUCCESS FORMULA

- I think you've got to be really clear about why you're doing it, and it's got to be your passion. I think if you're trying to do something that you don't really want to do but you think it should be done, it becomes really hard work. I think you've got to really believe in what you're doing. You've got to love what you're doing. You've got to love what you're doing or see it as part of the bigger picture of what you're doing it for. You've got to back yourself. There will be times when people question what you're doing.
- I think it's important to have a team around you, and that's not just a team in business, but a team around you in family and friendships. Have people around you who can scaffold you, it doesn't matter at what level you're at, you still need support.
- The business numbers still have to stack up, you need to know your budget, know your figures, do your cash-flows.
- Live within your means. It's really normal in small business to go without for many years so you can enjoy it later on.
- For us it's also been about bringing in some really good advisors, so having good advisors that are also looking at those figures with you and working with you, but know where you want to go and what your values and philosophies are.

MENTORS

- I was fortunate enough to start off with parents who mentored me and believed that you can do anything, and did talk to us about business and life plans. Right through my life I've had people I can confide in and be a sounding board for me, and they've been absolutely critical.
- For me, mentors are both men and women. some older, some the same age, some younger. Some have been formal mentors, and others have been wise people in my life.
- I still seek mentors, people I can bounce ideas off. It doesn't matter where you are at, you still need people you can talk to and scaffold you to the next level.

LESSONS LEARNT

- You're so much stronger than you could have ever imagined, but you have to choose to find that strength. You have to choose to be positive, you have to choose to believe in yourself. You have a choice every day when you get up. There's so much capacity in each of us to do and achieve, but we do have to choose to actually do it.



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SOMETHING AMAZING TO CREATE OR TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE

- In a rural context I think there's a couple of things. I still believe that really cohesive national advocacy for rural Australia and having a strong unified voice for Australian agriculture is still something we're seeking to achieve.
- The other thing for me is, for me personally. we've founded, it's taken a whole team of people, an organisation. so we've founded a small community leadership program. I'd love to see that sort of thing, particularly in Queensland go further so people can actually access the skills so they understand themselves enough to work with other people and to be the best person they can be. So, really having a framework in place where people can access this sort of training, leadership development, business skills. That's exciting, there's so much that can be achieved.