

Firm secures solid foothold in the Bay

Sue Russell

Sarah Schaw from Waipukurau-based business Schaw Building remembers how challenging times were when husband Marcus and her decided to step out on their own in October 2011.

"We had returned from Perth and it was difficult to secure long-term employment for Marcus so we came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to create our own company. We were in the peak of the recession," Sarah explains.

They weren't easy years as they found their footing in the competitive Hawke's Bay construction sector and, looking back on those early days, Sarah says there were times when they just about gave up. Happily though, with hard work and a developing reputation work began to come in.

"I think it comes down to your philosophy, your approach to what you do. Marcus has always been focussed on the quality of his work and in giving his customers the very best building experience and outcome."

Now, employing a team of nine qualified carpenters and apprentices the company has tended toward specialising in residential new builds, renovations and rural work, rather than commercial.

At any one time, up to four projects of various sizes are usually underway. It makes for fertile ground to train apprentices.

"We're very fortunate to have some excellent foremen so our apprentices are split between them. Some prefer the rural work while the others enjoy new builds so there's plenty of variety and opportunities for our apprentices to improve their skills."

Sarah says the situation of the business today is very healthy with the Hawke's Bay economy thriving.

There are no plans to grow the company any larger either and for good reason as she explains.

"With Marcus and I running the business we are at a size where we have hands-on control to ensure the quality of our work remains very high.

"We're also a little bit hamstrung in central Hawke's Bay for subsidies so that limits naturally the amount of work we're prepared to do at any one time."

Working hard at establishing solid relationships with those in the district has been a priority and Sarah says they both really value the subsidies they work with.



Schaw Building specialises in residential new builds, renovations and rural work.

Choosing to work with a business mentor since 2015 has been integral to their success, so much so that Sarah says the monthly meetings are invaluable enabling the couple to step back and assess objectively how their business is going.

"We've been able to structure our roles to work much better now.

"Marcus is responsible for quality, procurement, and getting the project out of the ground, then I take over the ongoing project management through to handing over the keys.

"As a couple running a company its so important to have someone else to talk things through with at times."

When Business Central spoke with Sarah work

had just finished on a four bedroom 220sqm home in Tikokino for Dan and Karen Tobin. T

he home, constructed of weatherboard took two years in the planning stages, where the owners worked in closely, not only with their draftsman but with Marcus and Sarah, to ensure all the elements the owners wanted could be achieved within budget.

"I can't stress how important that time and process was and it really meant the building experience and the resulting home delivered exactly what Dan and Karen wanted."

Sarah says its frustrating at times when there is a disconnect between the designer/architect/drafts-person and the builder and sadly what often

happens is that owners end up in a situation which is stressful.

"It just makes sense that the person who is there at the chalk-face building the home has an involvement in design decisions. When everyone works together it becomes a really positive experience for all."

Having the experience also of attending a leadership course has really helped cement Sarah's philosophy toward what matters. "When profit outweighs your purpose you have problems in your business. For us it has never been about the profit. Plan, Build, Achieve: Our purpose is to show that everyone can plan and build their own dream space. It doesn't have to be fraught with tension."



The team at Waipukurau-based business Schaw Building.

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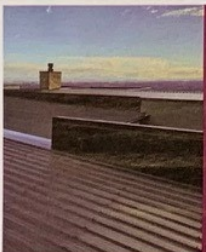


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