

# In the present moment

Sheryle Moon (BEc '75, DipEd '76) talks to *E&B Connect* about her successful career, being a 'manic planner' and gives advice on how to maintain a healthy work-life balance

SHERYLE MOON, PRESIDENT for Australia and New Zealand of international resourcing firm, RossJuliaRoss, is due to catch a flight to London in three hours. She's headed there to meet up with her son and celebrate his 21st birthday. Sheryle is completely unflustered and continues to give thoughtful, insightful answers in her phone conversation as her computer shuts down and her PA whispers some last minute instructions in the background. Before you know it, she's no longer in the office, but in a cab on the way to the airport.

This is Sheryle Moon at her best and highlights why she has become one of Australia's foremost experts on the subject of work-life balance.

Ironically though, it is a somewhat old fashioned view of women in the workforce that launched Sheryle's impressive career.

Like many parents of their generation June and Bob Emblen encouraged Sheryle to be a teacher. They believed women should have a solid, respectable career to fall back on when they returned to work after having children.

So, after completing her Bachelor of Economics at the University of Sydney

degree in 1975 Sheryle completed a Diploma in Education and had a long term career as a high school teacher all mapped out. However, after a brief stint teaching in Adelaide she returned home to be closer to her family and fortuitously took her sisters advice to apply for a job with IBM.

A 25-year career in the ICT sector followed including a Vice President position at Computer Sciences Corporation and Managing Partner at Accenture. It was icing on the cake when she was named Telstra Australian Business Woman of the year in July 1999.

Sheryle's reputation as an infatigable business woman was further enhanced when she authored a series of seminal books highlighting issues around work-life balance and gender equality in the workforce. Many of the recommendations outlined in her 2001 book *SelfScape: Success through Balance* have since been implemented as policy by the state and federal governments.

After a successful tenure in her last position as CEO of the Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) – the peak body for the information

and communications technology industry in Australia - a serendipitous meeting early in 2008 with Business entrepreneur, Julia Ross, inspired her to apply for the senior position at RossJuliaRoss Australia New Zealand.

While Sheryle's only been at RossJuliaRoss for a relatively short time, she's already making significant changes to the way business is done. "We're really looking closely at the way we find talent and we're developing creative ways for sourcing new candidates," she explains.

The role, however, is not without challenges and managing 14 highly motivated and diverse senior managers keeps her on her toes. "Managing any business is challenging in these uncertain economic times," says Sheryle. "But I believe the key to a successful business is really nurturing your staff and developing innovative solutions to meet their work-life needs."

Sheryle, who has three grown children (Sian 18, Alex 21, and Brad 30), believes her 'manic planner' personality has helped her practice what she preaches in terms of achieving a positive work-life balance. Although



she readily admits maintaining a satisfactory work-life balance is more challenging for women than ever before largely due to the long distances many have to travel to work.

“I was lucky that we lived in Canberra when the children were young and there were much shorter distances to travel between work, school and their extra-curricular activities. It would not have been possible for me to do all I did if I lived in Sydney.”

And despite her untraditional trajectory to the top of her field, she wouldn't change a thing, “I loved my time studying at Sydney University and was incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to study social economics with a group of passionate mentors who talked about issues like exploitation long before they were on the public agenda. I will never underestimate the value of my Economics degree.”

Despite all this hard work and success though, Sheryle clearly relishes her down time. “My all-time hero, John Maynard Keynes said on his death bed, ‘I should have drunk more champagne!’ and I think there's something in that for all of us.”

## SHERYLE MOON'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE

### 1) Create a vision for your life

“I spend the first weekend of each year making a collage of images relating to the goals I want to achieve in the coming 12 months. I take this paper with me everywhere and use it as a constant reminder to stay focused on the important things in life.”

### 2) Have clear goals and objectives

“It's important to make a list of all the big things you want to achieve in a lifetime. Start with a list of 21 and add to this if you need to.”

### 3) Surround yourself with support

“Don't try and do EVERYTHING yourself. The importance of a good support network cannot be underestimated so make sure you do the right amount of networking – at work and at home – to get the right people around you when you need them most.”

### 4) Practice 'presentism'

“Be present in the moment. When you are at work, be there with your whole heart and mind and when you are at home, don't talk to your husband while surreptitiously checking the BlackBerry. Make real dedicated time for each family member.”

### 5) Have more fun!

“Make sure you remember to have fun along the way and drink more champagne.”