

Meet the entrepreneur

Adela Mei, Jackdaw Coaching

Welcome back to our series, 'Meet the entrepreneur', where we sit down with founders, CEOs and the like and get to know the person behind the business.

Welcome Adela Mei, founder of Jackdaw Coaching, as we take a look into this entrepreneur and her business.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the business?

Adela: I advise small to medium-sized businesses on digital strategy, coaching, and sustainability, focusing on startups, coaches, and creatives. I believe business success shouldn't harm the earth and that no one should be left behind in the digital transformation. My love for nature and wildlife conservation inspired me to create Jackdaw Coaching, starting with wildlife organisations over 10 years ago. I aim to balance business growth with earth protection, showing that businesses can be a force for good as well as profit.

Q: What is your Monday morning routine to get you in the mood for a successful week?

Adela: I make my morning coffee (fair-trade organic, of course) and take it outside, to a small private area I have created in my garden, where I can sit and take some quiet time. I reflect on the world outside (nature) and breathe. I savour every moment of that quiet time and coffee!

Q: What is your favourite podcast to listen to/book to read for business advice?

Adela: I listen to Whitedove Gannon' which is one of the biggest business and marketing influencers EVER. Her podcast is called 'FemNation' but it relates to all genders.

Q: How do you navigate the digital world as an entrepreneur?

Adela: That's a huge question! Luckily I'm a digital strategist – so I realised years ago that I loved the online space, and that navigating online was actually easier for me to do than in the real world. Online forums, social media, and websites, to me, were all forms of communication, and I really thrive in that environment. The trick is to be able to discern what is real and what is fake, and with the AI revolution, this is becoming more nuanced (look out for my next blog post!).

Online branding has become a huge passion of mine, as has helping clients maintain brand integrity. How we are seen online is a reflection of our business, and for personal brands, also a reflection of our own integrity.

Q: What is your best IT infrastructure advice to other entrepreneurs when getting their business started?

Adela: With my clients, I start by doing a business review which encompasses several key elements.

1. Legals and accounting (the not-so-fun stuff) – getting online accounting software, your legals in place and building those strong foundations
2. Data storage – get organised, back up your content, your assets, and your business!
3. Security – this could be anything from encrypted password managers, to more secure data sharing.
4. Internet – make sure it's fast, reliable, and has good hardware (router/modem/ethernet cables etc.)
5. Hardware – personally, I would choose a desktop over a laptop, and Apple over Microsoft! I'm an Apple fan... but it's important to get the right kit to suit your business. Are you on the move all the time? Laptop is your best friend! Are you home-based and want a nice big screen (like me!)? Then it's an iMac. There's no one-size-fits-all.

But overall, be honest, it's more important to get a business coach or digital strategist involved to help you plan out a strategy and roadmap and to support you as you grow, when needed.

Q: What are your biggest pain points as an SME?

Adela: The 'feast and famine' cycle is tricky. As the owner of a company of one, losing one or two clients can have a large financial impact. Conversely, onboarding two or three new clients can overload your diary pretty fast! Learning to go with the ebbs and flows of business helps you stay calm and rational.

Working 'all the time' is also another challenge. I genuinely love my company. And I love what I do. The problem is, I can always do more, and do better, and learn something else. It's learning when to stop and say ok I know enough for now, I don't need to upskill all the time (as I'm writing this I have just signed up to a new course on working with dynamic fields and ACF with Wordpress... but anyway...).

Staying in your own lane is a huge challenge! It's so easy to get influenced by others, especially when they look like they're more successful than you are. Really focusing on your core strengths, your mission, your business, and staying in your lane is an art and a discipline!

Q: What helps you wind down at the end of the day?

Adela: Walking in nature always helps me wind down and reflect on the day. But if the weather is good, then I go out on my motorbike. I have a Triumph Bonneville Street Twin 900, which I learnt to ride at age 50, and it's THE best thing I've ever done. It clears your head and gives you a real sense of freedom.

Q: What did you want to be when you were growing up? Did you always see yourself being a business owner?

Adela: Growing up I was very independent and wasn't very good at following rules or being told what to do. Because of this, I was quite inventive. I remember going to people's houses in the snow, with a shovel, and offering to clear their drives! Now I own my own coaching company, which is so satisfying, as I make my own rules. I am really proud of owning a company.

Q: What do you see for the future of your business?

Adela: I'm really excited about the marketplace I'm building for my company, where clients can buy online courses and self-guided programs, allowing me to free up more time to work with businesses in person, and more intensely.

Something I've learned this year is just how impactful the in-person world really is. Don't get me wrong, I love the tech, the automation, and the ethical use of AI. But, what I love more is the one to one meetings, the eye contact, the handshakes, and the connection. Ultimately the future of my business is to be that bridge between tech and sustainability. between 'organic' and 'AI'. It's a really exciting and innovative space to be in.

Q: What do you do to stay ProActive (please excuse the pun) when times are hard as a business owner?

Adela: I have a lot of tools I use to stay proactive. I'm a member of a really supportive marketing community group (run by Whitedove Gannon) and I'm also a member of a fabulous PR group. The support from other business owners is invaluable, so we don't do this alone. Often we think of giving up, but really we just need some support sometimes – right?!

Another thing I do is focus on my charity work, which always reminds me why I'm doing this.

Q: What song would you play on a Monday morning to get you through the Monday blues?

Adela: This one is so cheesy – I listen to Sia 'Unstoppable' and also do some movements, to get my energy and vibe high and positive.