



60 Seconds with...

SUZANNE BALMER



You've got tremendous professional experience... accounting, tax, finance, HR, training... where is your natural home?

I think careers can be like a game of dominos – one thing leads to another. Most young people start off with what they think might work and adapt when opportunities come their way. I think teaching and learning has always been a recurring theme. Although I'm CFO at Executive Central, I also now provide coaching and engage in IP development. I see that as a natural progression that leverages my experience.

From the Executive Central 'engine room', you have a unique view of operations alongside strategy. How do you bring that perspective to your coaching?

I definitely wear a few hats! The CFO role gives me a different perspective, and I believe that anyone aspiring to organisational leadership roles should develop commercial acumen. After all, every decision in organisational life has a financial impact on something or someone. I bring that important perspective to coaching.

Is there a typical coaching client you work with?

Historically I have coached a few people from the financial area. However, currently none of my coachees have that background! I have a range of clients, from senior people in government, to front line and middle managers. The immediate themes in coaching are often about people and getting the best out of relationships with reports, peers, superiors, or other stakeholders. I love helping people with this aspect of their role and seeing their light bulb moments.

You have an interest in leadership development in the bush. Can coaching help?

I'm excited to be involved as a coach in our CoachLive services. In CoachLive, we have adapted Executive Central's successful coaching methodologies for use with video conferencing technology. This makes coaching available to everyone regardless of where they live – including rural and regional Australia. Watch this space!

You have 3 young adult children and 2 Moodles. What's your work-life balance secret?

My secret? The wisdom of age I guess! I do have a well-balanced life but it didn't come easily. I think of a good life in terms of four pillars: work, family, self, and recreation. It takes a while to get those right.

I've always worked. After my first baby, I went back to work part-time, but suddenly found that I didn't exactly feel a part of any of the worlds I inhabited, whether it was the workplace itself, play group, sports clubs, etc. I found the part-time aspect difficult and aligned it to not giving 100%. I think it takes some time to find your comfort zone.

I'm coaching some people in that transitional situation right now, and certainly my own experience helps me to understand what they're going through. As a coach, I can empathise, listen and help them find solutions themselves. Work-life balance? My advice is to review it often and adapt: it's easy to fall back into imbalance.

Of all your recreational activities, which do you find the most renewing?

Golf. It gives me exercise, thinking time, friendships, and a sense of belonging to a community. I have a diverse range of friends from all backgrounds and all ages. It's wonderful! As a committee member, I am able to bring my professional skills to assist others in that forum. It's also fantastic that I can pair up with my husband Rob, who is a fellow golf tragic!

Now just a word about those Moodles... are they allowed to sleep on the beds?

I would never have said I was a 'dog on bed' person, but actually right now one of them is on a day bed behind me so clearly that strategy is slipping! They are very much part of the family and if you're sitting on a couch here, you will find a dog on your lap. I will confess, sometimes if I'm having tea and toast in bed, they're allowed to come up for a cuddle...