

# Words just one way to deliver a message

■ Adam Orlando

## PROBLEM SOLVING

**COMPANY:** Alive & Kicking Solutions.

**BUSINESS:** Specialist training & development, consultancy, corporate communications.

**PROBLEM:** Branding, communicating business model to potential clients.

**SOLUTION:** Offer 'try-before-you-buy' program, reveal training delivery methods to competitors.

A COMPLEX business model can be difficult to summarise verbally to new clients, especially when word-of-mouth is your only marketing tool.

It's a problem faced by Alive & Kicking, a specialist training, development, consultancy, and corporate communications business founded in 2000 by facilitator Fran Berry and former banker and IT professional Phil Everist.

"One of the biggest issues is branding," Mr Everist told *WA Business News*, adding that in 10 years the company had only used word-of-mouth as a marketing tool.

"It has been challenging because we don't want to stand up and say we're a training company, because there are so many others out there, so we are always trying to explain the level of differentiation we're working in."

Ms Berry said the company, which employs five staff, was differentiated by a focus on making fundamental cultural shifts of behaviour in organisations, not just delivering training outcomes.

"We believe that, as a business, we have a unique selling difference to our competitors through the way in which our services are delivered," Ms Berry told *WA Business News*.

She said the training methods were extremely hands-on, focusing on participation and active learning, not just theory.



**PENETRATION:** Fran Berry and Phil Everist have spent 10 years building the Alive & Kicking brand using only word of mouth.

Photo: Grant Currall

"What we really do is difficult to explain in a 30-second elevator pitch," Ms Berry said.

"That major issue we face is the same one we've always faced; how to help organisations understand that communication is the most critical skill set any employee, at any level, can possibly have."

Ms Berry said a complex business model meant the company was forced to constantly create new and different ways to introduce its ideas into the corporate world.

She said organisations with progressive thinkers were likely to understand Alive & Kicking's business model quickly and take its services on, while those organisations with "old school" leadership tended to hang on to their old ideas and place the business in the "too far out there" group.

The company employed two strategies to address this issue.

"First, we have created a very unique program that we call 'try before you buy'," Ms Berry said.

"We wanted people to understand

how different we were and this has been a massive challenge, but how do we get to people to make them understand how dynamic and different we are?"

"Retailers allow you to test the product, car dealers allow you to test the car, when you go to a store you may try on the clothes before you buy them, most people will try on a pair

makers, who are under no obligation to purchase services after they have tried them.

"If, at the end of the course, the decision-makers decide that we are not the right fit for their organisation, then we shake hands and walk away," Ms Berry said.

"Interestingly that's never happened."

**"... communication is the most critical skill set any employee, at any level, can possibly have." - Fran Berry**

of jeans before they know, 'yes, this fits me'.

"It's an analogy we work from because we have to be a good corporate fit.

"And we have to understand the client before we're going to have this relationship with one another, this is why you date before you marry, in most cases."

Alive & Kicking offers a free customised course for 12 decision-

The second strategy was to build the Alive & Kicking brand as a market leader among its competitors.

"We have decided to share the secrets of what makes our presentation and delivery methods so dynamic and successful," Ms Berry said.

"We realised that our real goals could only be achieved by sharing."

The company created the Dynamic Training Skills - Master Facilitator program, which is designed to equip

clients and potential competitors with skills and techniques to take back to their organisations.

This has proven to be a valuable initiative, with many trainers within the industry already signing up to the program.

Ms Berry said being mentored by *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* author Robert Kiyosaki helped combine his techniques with her own training and experience to teach powerful presentation techniques used by the likes of Anthony Robbins and Bob Proctor.

"Our reputation in the market is very strong now when it comes to delivering dynamic and memorable programs at the same time, accomplishing the outcomes desired by the stakeholders," Ms Berry said.

Through developing its brand, the company has grown to take on more global clients such as American Express and Dell, being positioned to secure larger and more lucrative contracts, as well as gain a reputation as a source of training for industry trainers.