



Alex Mitchell, (left) Facilitator of Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs thanks Julie Mason , the Social Media Princess for her presentation at the October 2013 SCWE event.

Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs — Building Connections

Alex Mitchell admits her life is flat out busy. She gets up before 5am each day and has not watched television for years. Yet, since 2008, she has made time to be the facilitator for the Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs.

Asked why she does this voluntary work, Alex says, “I couldn’t stop doing it. I just love it. Every time I leave a meeting, I feel on top of the world. Sometimes, I don’t feel like that when I arrive, I’m stressed.”

“Then I leave the meeting and I’ve hugged almost forty women and we’ve smiled and we’ve laughed and we’ve learnt something and I think, oh yeah, this is really worth doing.”

“I think that when you’re in this part of your life, where you’re juggling business and family and elderly parents, there is a part of me that needs to do something for the community otherwise I’m only in this tiny little nucleus that’s all about me.”

The Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs group started out in 2006 with six women connecting to support each other in their business journeys. Today they have 761 members. The central activities of the group are networking and education.

Every six weeks, Alex Mitchell organizes a lunch and workshop for the members on a Saturday afternoon in Caloundra. Members pay \$25.00 for the lunch. The speakers donate their time. Recent events have sold out as only 38 places are offered.

Alex explains its success, “As a solo entrepreneur and a middle-aged woman, you have to be the IT person, the marketing person, the sales person and everything else. You’re working for yourself. You’re usually running a house and a family. Some people are still running other jobs while their business gets big enough.”

“So there is an awful lot you don’t know and you don’t have the time and the money to do that training. So that’s where Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs has found its niche.”

Alex is a solo businesswoman herself. “I’m very time poor. I wanted to go to meetings where I’d learn something really tangible for my business.”

“What’s really special about the group is that people come along and they feel supported. They feel like they’re part of a community,” Alex says.

“Most of the women work alone. A lot of them work from home. It’s very isolating. [Attending an event] gets you outside your industry. You’re meeting with other women who really understand the ups and downs of working for yourself,” explains Alex.



Samantha Gillard (left) and Lynda Palai at the September 2013 SCWE event.

Local business woman Lynda Palai attends the SCWE events regularly. “It’s been great to come and meet new people and actually learn some new skills. Each of the topics seem to be very relevant to developing and moving forward and it’s fun,” she explains.

Samantha Gillard has attended events for two years. She says, “Networking events like this are a great way to meet people and let them see the face behind the name. That’s been amazing for my business. People can see the energy behind the brand.”

For Alex Mitchell, facilitating the Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs keeps her in touch with her early days in business. “When I started, the support that people gave me and the ideas that I got from other people, and the generosity, I would never have got where I am without that.”

“So I need to keep remembering that now that my business is successful. There are other people who are learning and growing and you’ve got to keep it going around,” she says with a smile.



Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs at their September 2013 event.
Photo contributed by Karen Cougan.

About the Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs

This is a Facebook group.

There is no obligation to attend events.

There is no advertising on the wall and no membership fee.

Dates for workshops in 2014 have been announced on the wall.

To join, go to the [Sunshine Coast Women Entrepreneurs Facebook page](#) .

Alex Mitchell is currently taking speaker applications for 2014.

Alex can be contacted through the Facebook page.