



Turning your passion into a business



Dunedin's Workplace First Aid founder and owner, Phil Hudson, "First Aid Phil" is passionate about first aid training, and the difference it can make to everyday lives.



PHIL HAS BEEN providing first aid training in his own business, for the past 15 years, he puts his success down to teaching in a practical, common sense way and no power point presentations.

When Phil read Michael Gerber's classic *The E Myth Revisited* recently, he discovered he had been doing everything Gerber advises in setting up and running a business.

When you talk with Phil Hudson you realise he is more a 'follow your passion' than a 'follow the text books' kind of guy. So instead of chasing academic credentials, he trained as a scuba diving instructor, qualifying as the world's youngest on the day he turned 18, the minimum age for doing so.

Later, while working for a Dunedin dive shop, he found himself teaching more first aid than diving courses, despite having added to his diving knowledge and expertise with several specialist qualifications. While he loved diving, he discovered a passion for training people in how to save lives using first aid.

One day Phil had a eureka moment in the most mundane of situations. He was approached in a supermarket aisle by a tearful woman, who said that the first aid skills he'd taught her had saved the life of a family member. He suddenly understood that what he was doing was unique.

A person who thrives on helping people, Phil began to look

more closely at why his training technique was so successful. The incident in the supermarket turned out to be more than a one-off. It happened regularly – and still does.

He decided to set up on his own business and took a part-time job as a lifeguard at Moana Pool while developing his side-hustle – teaching first aid courses.

Realising he didn't know enough about business, when offered a role at Surf Lifesaving Otago as regional manager, he grabbed it with both hands. Over the next five years he learned the politics of business, about tax obligations and all business-related tasks, how to write funding applications, process GST and take board minutes.

He kept teaching first aid courses – in the evening and at weekends – even using his annual leave to get his lifesaving message in front of more people (thanks to the support of his wife Tracy, who keeps the family running.). He networked hard with business owners and schools, and was part of the water rescue squad, progressing into teaching people how to escape from helicopters if they needed to ditch into the water. His scuba diving, first aid and life-guarding background led him to be asked to instruct the Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) course, the content of which he naturally rewrote and improved.

Phil has continued to teach this course for a decade and is



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the only qualified instructor in Otago and Southland. Recently, his training resulted in the survival of three crewmembers whose helicopter ditched into the sea off the Auckland Islands. Sir Richard Hayes, the chief pilot of the helicopter's owner, Southern Lakes Helicopters, said afterward it was rare for people to survive such crashes.

Their odds, however, improve if they have undergone HUET training and Phil Hudson believes the incident clearly demonstrates the importance of all helicopter crews undergoing such training for marine flying.

In April 2004 – exactly 15 years ago – Phil officially set up Workplace First Aid and in 2016 he won the Future Business Leader section of the Westpac Otago Chamber of Commerce Business Awards. He says, "I wasn't even looking to enter. I just wanted the judges' independent feedback on my business plan so I could improve my business model."

Workplace First Aid is now recognised as a Private Training Establishment (PTE) with NZQA, a feat that took Phil many years

and countless hours of writing documents to achieve. But the company might have remained just a small Dunedin business if it hadn't been for another chance encounter.

While waiting to pick up his children from school one day, Phil ambled over to the only other father also waiting and discovered he was the exact person needed to help take the company to the next level. One of Phil's most pressing problems was the time eaten up by repetitive tasks. He needed to automate his business's processes if it was to grow. Nigel Hulls has been instrumental in helping him achieve that by designing and building a fully automated system that allows the business to run itself. Now, what would have taken Phil an entire day is completed in two minutes. Plus, he can monitor performance indicators remotely.

Central to Workplace First Aid's success in the market has been finding the right team members – Phil doesn't regard them as staff. Currently there are eight, but he is constantly looking for new people who embody the same caring and sharing philosophies that he himself demonstrates. Particularly, he is keen to find regional managers who can shake up first aid training in other parts of the country.

Since its launch, Workplace First Aid has leapt from success to success and is on track to become fully nationwide inside the next two years. Then, Phil Hudson says, look out Australia! ●

www.wfirstaid.co.nz

