

LESSONS FROM THE FRONT LINE

- Keep your administration in order, including your personal finances.
- Keeping track of cash flow, even in a business that is struggling, takes up a lot of time and energy.
- Keep your personal relationships in order. Business becomes consuming and it is important to have a forgiving partner.

McAdam sees his firm's role as part of an arms race. It supports enforcement agencies such as the state and federal police forces, the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency, and the Australian Secret Intelligence Organisation – the elite troops that target organised crime gangs by setting up sting operations and other actions.

Pure Hacking is more on the defensive line, he says, setting up the machine-gun nests and bunkers to protect the vulnerable population behind them. Criminal organisations are targeting the credit card details of the millions of consumers who input their information into computer systems daily.

McAdam says any reasonably large firm is being attacked every day. Media reports earlier this year suggested China-based hackers were mounting attacks against big miners such as BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto in Australia. It was assumed the Chinese government was trying to access information to help it in price negotiations with the miners. McAdam says the publicity led to mining companies contacting his firm to have their computer firewalls tested.

McAdam says his staff have a real dedication to their work. "When you invest huge amounts of mental energy over a week or weeks to crack a system, there is a real release of emotion when you succeed – it's the stuff that has my people leaping out of their chairs," he says.

"And so education is a large part of the ongoing training. I send people to the United States and Europe to attend the latest hacking conferences. One of the joys is watching them grow in talent."

McAdam also views the business as a public service. When a big firm puts up a firewall, it's likely to have been supplied by one of the big global internet security firms. But each corporation's operating system has its own nuances that can provide cracks for hackers to enter.

Pure Hacking has augmented its penetration testing to find those gaps, with solutions to plug them. This involves writing code, a lot of which the company makes available for public access on the internet.

There is also a proprietary library of special code that the company is building both for clients and to act as "secret weapons" in the arms race. McAdam says the organisations globally that are fighting the hackers try to help each other stay ahead of the enemy.

Looking back on why his company is succeeding, two things stick in McAdam's mind. The first is to have the organisation's administration in order, including personal finances. Even in a struggling business, cash is still flowing in and out. He says that if you don't get it right, it sucks up too much time and puts a venture at risk of failure. McAdam was lucky in that when he worked in the corporate world he was a great saver, so he had the discipline and strength to withstand the first few years of minimal cash flow and no wage.

The other secret to success, he says, is personal relationships. "A business is an obsession, so you have to have strong personal relationships. To have so much time tied up in the business you require a lot of forgiveness from your partner. It's a mature person who can understand and give you the room you need to make the business work."

In five years, McAdam expects the company to have tripled in size, but he has learnt along the way how to delegate responsibilities, freeing up some time for himself. He says it will not be another eight years till his next holiday – but neither will he be taking his foot off the business's accelerator.

Although he could go back to the corporate world, McAdam says it's not going to happen. "The entrepreneurial part of me loves having a business – the whole concept around choice and the right to make my own mistakes (and so many things don't go right), to be able to own that and enjoy the rewards as well.

"People say, do what you love and the money will come. I don't believe that. You have to do what the market actually needs," he adds.

"In my case, there is a personal value in what I do. I was a policeman for nine years and then computer protection services for IBM before starting Pure Hacking. So I guess security is in my make-up". **BRW**

GROWTH BUSINESS

LYONS

Contact John C. Lyons:
john.lyons@lyonsanddebono.com



On a mission to change perceptio

• Noel Pearson, a former lawyer and now founding director of the York Institute for Policy and Leadership, is on a social-marketing mission to raise Aboriginal people from what he describes as "abject misery". He'll most probably succeed where others have failed, principally because he is slowly changing their perception.

Rejecting welfare as destructive to the cause, Pearson's thinking is that his people must learn to help themselves, and that this won't happen until the "welfare pedestal" is removed or lowered, education of a generation kicks in and, in his words, "the flare of self interest for life is ignited in them".

At a recent dinner I was privileged to attend, Pearson spelled out his formula for success, likening it to a staircase with three key attributes.

• Like a staircase, every organisation needs a foundation – in this case, of strong social and personal responsibility norms. He cites Asian families as good at providing this for their children.

• The second part of the staircase is what he calls infrastructure – "the capability to make lives they have reason to value". Capability in this context, he says, is the sum of personal responsibility and opportunity.

• The third part he describes as "the power of choice". Individuals can choose to "climb an elevator of opportunity" or the government can create an engine to lift them to a better life, much like a forklift. He says hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted on this last option.

It is still possible for an indigenous Australian with several children to choose not to work and receive \$14 an hour in welfare. For young people, an apprenticeship path is likely to produce an hourly rate less than the welfare rate, but this ignores the potential for future greater income and a fulfilled life.

Pearson says it remains a great struggle for him to get his people to understand there is nothing wrong with self interest – to see it as a power for good, not selfishness. His great hope is what he describes as the universal desire of mothers wanting a better life for their children.

Pearson, now 45, was raised at Hope Vale Mission in Cape York. He knows that he must change target audience perception in order to change the logic of their decision-making.

John Lyons is an independent company director with a background in marketing and innovation. He is a co-author with Dr Edward de Bono.

BRW.

• BRW.COM.AU

For more columns by John Lyons, go to
BRW.com.au



Pearson says it is a great struggle to get his people to understand there is no wrong with self interest. It is a power for good.