

FEATURE

The spirit of success



Plain speaking: Siimon Reynolds advises "if all you are is great at your job and a nice person, you can get to the top".

Business tycoon and former adman Siimon Reynolds tells **Sue White** why he believes every worker should think like an entrepreneur.

Former adman Siimon Reynolds may have kicked off his career at 18, but he also began the search early.

"I spent several years at school trying to find a job I'd love," he says. "I remember walking into an advertising agency and seeing people wearing jeans and T-shirts, playing darts and making money, and I thought, 'That's a career I could do'."

What followed was a long reign in the advertising industry, most famously as the creative force behind one of Australia's first HIV campaigns (featuring the Grim Reaper, back in 1987), and

then as director of his own advertising agency.

While it wasn't all roses, his first career taught him well.

"Advertising is one of the great preparations for any career, as you're a professional problem-solver," he says.

Eventually, Reynolds took his problem-solving ability in various entrepreneurial directions outside the field of advertising. He has founded communications companies (one of which, the Photon Group, was valued at more than \$500 million when he left it in 2008); made it to the BRW 200 Executive Rich List; and written five books (his

most recent, *Why People Fail*, was an Australian bestseller). Today, he spends much of his time on the speakers' circuit as well as mentoring chief executives, entrepreneurs and business owners.

But while entrepreneurship is a "hot" career trend, Reynolds says it's not the right choice for everyone.

"There's enormous risk... It's very exciting, but it can be very painful, too - sometimes simultaneously," he laughs.

That said, in his opinion there's much to be gained from taking an entrepreneurial approach to a career.

"I truly believe everybody who

works in a company should have the spirit of an entrepreneur. [There is a pay-off if you are willing] to do things differently; to try to create new kinds of value for a customer; be ever-optimistic in the face of adversity; and to be results oriented not just time and effort oriented." Unfortunately, many of us prefer to rest on our laurels instead.

"People aren't devoted to continuous learning," he says. "They don't have 20 years' experience; they have two years' experience repeated 10 times. They reach a level of adequacy at their job and don't seek to advance beyond that."

Reynolds believes the easiest thing to change when a career isn't going well is our own level of commitment.

"The biggest error people make is that they get dissatisfied with their career and do things half-heartedly. But it's vital, even if you are dissatisfied, that you do things 100 per cent. When you do, everything gets better around you. But while committing to doing a job well is one thing, believing we can do it is quite another.

"[It's hard] to develop the belief that not only are you capable of reaching the top, but that you deserve to. Those beliefs are blocked by some very subtle stories we may have developed in our heads."

For those looking to give their career a boost, success doesn't need to be complicated. When it comes to climbing the ladder, Reynolds says the simple things can pay big dividends.

"Create a list of your strengths and weaknesses," he advises.

"Then methodically develop the strengths and counteract the weaknesses, either by avoiding doing those tasks or improving the weakness to the point where you are at least adequate [at it]. If you do that, you'll progress.

"Yes, networking helps, as does being politically astute. But in the end if all you are is great at your job and a nice person, you can get to the top."