
Miss Moneypenny – ‘Don’t listen to negative people’

Thinking business with Rani Dabrai, otherwise known as Miss Moneypenny. A concierge for business owners.

[Miss Moneypenny](#) is a virtual company that offers virtual assistance to companies big and small. Rani Dabrai, the owner, has hundreds of clients worldwide and recently opened her new headquarters in Dublin.

How has your company grown?

In a pretty unconventional way. We began as a lone ranger in the wilderness. Nobody knew or understood what we did, and most people thought I was a bit bonkers and delusional but I’m pretty stubborn as a person, so we persevered.

After about five years we started to gain some real traction as the market understood the concept of remote support and then we began to get better known across the SME sector. We now cover a broad client base and operate globally. Our customer base goes from self-employed individuals to SMEs all the way up to corporates and executives who use us for concierge services.

What are your expansion plans?

We’re focusing on becoming better known in Ireland, but we also want to establish ourselves in an international market and help the Irish diaspora. We’ve found that in recent years, about half our income comes from abroad, so we want to use our strong homeland foundation to help build our international reputation further, starting with Europe and moving beyond.

ThinkBusiness.ie has a tagline of ‘supporting every step’, what supports did you need at every stage of your businesses growth?

We had some brilliant supports from the Local Enterprise Office regarding mentoring and some grant assistance in the early days. When the company was small, the kind of supports that helped us the most were local connections, people who understood that we were small but growing, and were willing to make the introductions to help us.

We’ve always bootstrapped the company, so finance wasn’t something we chased. At this ‘scaling stage’ of the business, the support that would be relevant right now would be in the area of export assistance and connections.

And at any stage of business development, I think it’s never a waste of time to work with a mentor who has been there and done things before you.

Success leaves clues, and it’s always wise to listen to people who’ve made the mistakes already.

Are you a serial entrepreneur?

Until recently, that answer would be no. But I am just in the process of building and launching another business with a partner. I am passionate about business in general, and entrepreneurship is my oxygen. I love to do things well, so once I know something is up and running smoothly, I’d always consider another challenge. I don’t think I will ever stop.

What are your business's biggest strengths and weaknesses?

Our main strength is, without fail, our talent. I'm so fortunate to work with a lovely team of people who just happen to be brilliant at what they do.

Other strengths we have would be our systems. I've spent a lot of time, money, and energy on making sure that we have nothing but the best systems in place to manage every aspect of our workflow and information management - everything from finance, to CRM projects to SEO.

On any given day I know how many tasks were open, closed, and completed. I can see what's been done early or is in danger of being late. I can analyse staff performance and avert a workload bottleneck. I know birthdays, pet names and flight preferences of our clients at the touch of a button. Our finance systems tell us our real-time profit and loss, our assets and liabilities, and our performance statistics. Having all this information on a live basis allows me to plan for chaos and see around corners. We'd be lost without it.

Weaknesses I try not to think about too much, but if I had to say anything, the fact that we are a virtual company means I don't necessarily spend enough time with my team as I would like.

What do you like most and least about your job?

I honestly love every minute of my work. I love my team, clients and the sheer variety of the work we get asked to do. On the flip side, I do have to travel quite a bit which means I'm juggling time with my family and often doing long days.

If money was no issue what type of people would you hire?

I love this question. I would hire an in-house psychologist, to help us understand the team, the market, and our clients better. We already work with someone on a contract basis, but I would love someone in-house to give us a deeper insight into what makes people tick, and businesses work better. We work with so many companies, and the question I'm asked daily is: how can I run my business? Our consistent challenges every day are getting buy-in on all levels and helping people to change their habits to work better and live better.

Are there any magazines, blogs, newsletters or brands on social media you read religiously?

I get the Quartz Newsletter daily, and I also love Happify daily and I am obsessed with many Twitter accounts for book lists and literature. The other company I am involved in, Economics Without Boundaries, does a daily 'word of the day' email and I get this every day to learn something I didn't know.

What is the best advice you have for someone wanting to start and grow their own business?

Don't listen to people who tell you you're mad and don't believe in your idea. Just keep going. Just when you feel like quitting, keep going because you're probably 99% of the way there. And read. Read, read, read. Learn all the time and be open to everything.

What is your death row meal?

I am obsessed with so food this is tough. Some crumbled goat's cheese with cranberry and some salad to start with, then fillet steak (cooked blue) with creamy peppercorn sauce, (on the side) home cooked fries, onions, and coarse grain mustard. For dessert, I'd have a creme brulee and an espresso martini. A lovely Pinot Grigio from France wouldn't go amiss, and I'd probably be partial to a bit of serrano ham somewhere in there too even though it doesn't match anything. And some scallops. And some capers. I can't decide. This is the hardest question. And some Murphy's Dingle Sea Salt Ice Cream too.

Interview by Barry Walsh.

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