

Marlena's Story: More to Me than What You See

Marlena wrote her own story.

I am a simple person and yet complex at the same time.

I have dreams, fears and I sometimes wonder where I will be in say ten years' time.

Currently I am trying to develop a number of businesses that will secure my future and provide an income to support these dreams and goals of mine. Actually I bought my first business when I was 15, some five years ago. A simple business that wasn't that expensive, but was purchased due to the fact I was in Year 9 and basically wanted a part time job, as most of my peers were starting to get jobs. Never did I think at that stage this small business would be the start of what it has become today.

Apart from the financial benefits that being employed has, my business has bought me many other rewards. My business is set up at a market and I am known by many people and provide a very valuable service. I am passionate about what I offer and enjoy my customers, who happen to primarily be children. My business has grown rapidly over the five years and recently I expanded and became Australia's youngest franchisee in this industry.

Work offers people more than money, but for me it is vitally important that I create a viable and successful business. So what is this business I own? Well, for a start it is a business in which I can't do everything that it requires for to run. My business has many tasks in order for it to operate and as in any successful business I require a number of people to run it. As owner and manager I oversee everything to ensure its success.

I own two Jumping Castle businesses called [Burleigh Bouncers](http://www.marlena.com.au/burleigh-bouncers.html) (<http://www.marlena.com.au/burleigh-bouncers.html>) and run these in a number of forums such as party hires, markets and events. It is something I may or may not continue with in the near future. It has been an awesome ride and I now have liberty to grow it with many other streams or build it up and sell it off. I am in the driver's seat and I have a say where I am going.

While it wasn't specifically my plan to be a Jumping Castle owner I did desire to be a business owner and I took an opportunity when it came. My one castle and one market have grown and now I own 15 castles with many events in my local area. I contribute to many fundraising events and am well known.

I have furthered my studies in Business Management and now am free to continue another passion; writing and presenting. I am currently studying Journalism and have recently had the pleasure of interviewing a number of well-known sports stars and business people. While these interviews have been interesting, my goal with this is to become the next Molly Meldrum and do music journalism. I have already started

my plan to see this goal be achieved and have had a number of musicians and promoters show an interest.

The benefit of me doing this is I now have a [YouTube account](http://www.youtube.com/user/theaacjournalist) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/theaacjournalist>) to show my work and am building a portfolio. With this I aim to have a freelance journalism job within the next 12 months. I have the magazine I *will* be working for in sight and I *will* be their local music journalist reporting on all musicians that come into the Gold Coast and Brisbane region. Heck I will even travel to get that interview as this is yet another passion of mine. There are many job opportunities for this to occur and I *will* be paid to do this very soon.

Public speaking is something I started doing in Year 10. I was chosen as a keynote speaker for a government event and this got me thinking that maybe I can do this for a living. To this day I am pursuing this as a paid career move.

I find it fascinating that people actually pay you to hear a good story or think that I have something to offer them in the way of training. I have travelled quite a bit and I suppose this interests people. I could bore you for hours about my travel stories from snowmobiles in Japan, Touring Buddhist Tiger Temple near the Burmese border in Thailand to tackling all those bridges in Venice. People actually pay good money for that so why would I not pursue this as an income stream?

I recently met Sir Richard Branson and he said to me if you can make a living out of something you are passionate about the money is irrelevant and will sort itself out. I believe this so much and consider myself lucky that I have a number of career plans that both have potential to be earning money and are also what I enjoy. This may change or develop further or I may choose another career move. I am only 20 but my life looks good.

My story actually starts well before I purchased a business, started writing, interviewing celebrities or public speaking. I do not come from a wealthy family and I am so thankful for the people that have supported me. I would not have this business if it were not for my mother, my teachers, my peers and my friends. I have grown up not being defined by my disability.

I intentionally have left telling you what my disability is until the final paragraph due to the fact it is not what I wish to be remembered for. I can't escape the fact that I have cerebral palsy.

It is pretty hard to hide the fact I get around in a wheelchair, however I don't get up every morning and look in the mirror and think, "Does my backside look big in this" or "I wonder if people will notice me"? I can't hide the fact that I use a talking device and facilitated communication to communicate. My obvious abilities are often overshadowed my obvious disability, but only to those who do not know me.

While I am still young I would prefer to be known as a journalist, a friend, a writer, an entrepreneur or many other titles rather than being disabled. We all have a story and

mine is interesting to some people, especially the fact I want to make a living doing public speaking despite the fact I can't verbally talk.

I believe we can all look at our lives in a positive or negative way regardless of whether we have a disability or not. Those who are successful set goals and plan where they want to go, get rid of the doubters, surround themselves with positive people and work hard at achieving whatever it is their heart's desire. Thank you for allowing me to share my story with you. Feel free to be in touch and checkout my [YouTube](#) clips.

“The sky is not the limit, there are footprints on the moon aren't there?”

You can contact Marlana through her website at www.marlena.com.au or email her at marlena_katene@hotmail.com.

You can watch Marlana's YouTube videos by accessing her YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/theaacjournalist>

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