

THE WELLNESS WARRIOR

Kate Farr chats to the founder of the Wellness 360 Consultancy and Chairman of the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital Fund, Jo Soo-Tang.

What is Wellness 360?

Wellness 360 is a marketing consultancy that exclusively works with wellness, health, fitness and family-focused firms. Among the marketing services provided are strategy development, media relations, design, digital services and event planning and management.

Tell me about your family

Our family of five consists of me, my husband and our three gorgeous kids. Mischa is ten years old, Myles is seven and our youngest, Mia, is four years old.

What did you do before launching your business?

I worked here in Hong Kong for a multinational company, heading up a marketing communications department. I also currently chair The Hong Kong Adventist Hospital Foundation... which has really become another full-time job!

Where did the idea come from to go it alone?

A very good question! I've been working since my university days, and as a parent I believe that it's vitally important to pass the values of working, making your own money, being independent and the associated self-worth on to my children. I was very lucky in that I always had flexi-hour roles which meant that my schedule was manageable with two kids. Of course I was tired, but which mother isn't? When Mia came along, my stress levels went through the roof. I realised that something had to give and that I had to reorganise my priorities. What I needed was a role that would allow me to plan my own schedule, dress how I wanted, pick up my children from school and still manage to have a career. This is how Wellness 360 was born.

What made you choose wellness?

After I left the property industry, I wanted to spend more time learning. I was already very interested in wellness, health and fitness issues due to my charity work at Adventist



Hospital. Once I realised that I was looking after everyone's well being but my own, I knew that I needed to address this and so my personal interest in the sector grew as my knowledge did. I'm still learning every day – this sector is constantly growing, and organising the Wellness 360 fairs always brings new businesses and initiatives into the spotlight.

How did you translate your business idea from concept to reality?

With the support of friends. I decided to go completely back to basics with the concept and now I only take on clients that are already within my network – in fact my first client was the husband of one of my girlfriends who needed marketing support. She lent me a venue to host my first fair then partnered with me to invite her

contacts. From that point, the fairs have grown larger each time, and my consultancy work has increased alongside them.

What has been your biggest business challenge to date?

Initially, it was doing everything on my own – not being able bounce ideas around with colleagues. Fortunately, I now have staff with whom I can share the victories and disappointments, but those start-up days can be lonely.

What do you love most about what you do?

I love that I learn something new every day. I'd stopped learning within my corporate job and felt like I was put into a box with no doors, so this is such a contrast. I also love the freedom of being able to control my own schedule... bye-bye nine-to-five.

How do you juggle your business with family life – what's the biggest challenge in maintaining a good balance?

I'm at a very happy place with the balance right now. I make sure that my office days are very focused, and leave Fridays free. I work from 8.45am until 2.30pm every day when I pick up my children from school, and then I don't check email again until around 9pm. The biggest challenge is in finding time for yourself, your friends and business partners.

What advice would you give to other working parents? Any specific pros and cons?

Make sure that you enjoy what you do and that you can fit your family into the mix, but most importantly try to dedicate half a day each week to yourself. Surround yourself with people who are positive, have good energy and that will support you no matter what.

What's next for your business? What are your plans and aspirations?

I would eventually love to build a wellness centre and work with more like-minded people, and while I have no immediate plans to execute this, it's important to have dreams. ☑