



grow



RLWA

What it took to build RLWA into a multi-million-Rand manufacturing business



Getting your company structure right is a critical step on the path of success for your business. For entrepreneur Riaan Langeveld, owner of RL Wood & Aluminium (RLWA) that turns over close to R40 million a year, instituting effective business processes, and being able to delegate to contractors he could trust, was a vital part of his business journey.

A multi-million-Rand manufacturing business

After working in construction in the United Kingdom for a few years, Riaan Langeveld returned home to South Africa and began manufacturing custom-made wooden doors and door frames in his workshop, on a smallholding in Centurion.

As his business grew, Riaan found that balancing the physical manufacturing of the products and the necessary client-facing administration, was proving to be a challenge. It wasn't long before business boomed and he found himself responding more to customer queries, quotation requests, and regular requests for updates and projected delivery schedules, rather than manufacturing the doors and frames he needed to fill the orders.



The most difficult aspect of business growth for a small business, is to grow from one stage of your business to the next

Growth to the next level

Riaan engaged Grow Business Coaching to give him the guidance he needed to grow when his turnover was still under R5 million. Riaan found himself on a hamster wheel – running fast while staying in the same place. Working with his coach, they focused on fixing the administrative side of his business, working on getting clear processes and systems in place. This created a lot more control and predictability and made dealing with the customers easier.

Riaan welcomed the guidance, “I found that every time I was faced with a challenging and demanding issue due to the growth of the business, a well-planned and structured business process, implemented and monitored well, always brought results.”

To manage the installation process more efficiently, Riaan outsourced it – converting his teams into independent contractors, in essence, changing his business model. He provided them with a vehicle to operate their own business and implemented a fixed-pay basis to drive accountability. This decision allowed him to reduce both overheads and the administration that comes with managing permanent teams.

“The restructuring seemed to be a mammoth task at first, that could both be successful and destructive to a business,” says Riaan. “I realised that initially you will face negativity, complaints, turnover losses, excessive waste, etc, but once everyone is settled and the newly trained team is motivated and comfortable with the processes, everything seems to fall into place and efficiency and profitability is the result.”



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A game plan for sales growth

The next step in Riaan’s journey was understanding the sales process and improving his sales skills. As the primary client contact, he needed to really understand his customers’ needs and employ a successful sales formula to ensure he closed each sale.

Riaan worked with his coach to develop a sound sales process and became good at each step in this process. Having a clear and well-practiced approach to selling really grew his ability to sell.



Hiring mistakes and successes

Expanding in this manner was a huge step, and so was the decision that came with it: hiring a factory manager to oversee daily operations.

While a sound business practice, the hiring of the factory manager brought even bigger challenges. The manager was unable to gain control – quality and production dropped. Riaan found himself on the hamster-wheel once more, spending his valuable time fighting fires, rather than growing the business.

Step-by-step, he painstakingly pieced the business back together, slowly addressing all the problems. Challenging as this period was for the business, he held on to the lessons he learned from his coaching sessions, never losing his ability to sell. This tenacity helped him to turn the business around and return it to profitability.

While the factory manager wasn't the best fit for the business, Riaan knew that he couldn't manage all aspects of the business on his own. He made the big decision to hire a dedicated sales team and trained them using the same formula that had proved successful for him. From there, Riaan continued to make astute hiring decisions, securing quality employees who he could trust to get the job done.

Allowing himself to delegate to others wasn't easy at first, "As an electrical engineer, and an extremely practical, hands-on person, I always thought that there is no one as thorough, motivated, positive and detailed as I am, and that I will never be able to delegate any of my functions or responsibilities to anyone that's competent enough. But oh, was I wrong! I've come to realise that if you are willing to share every single bit of information and put in a lot of effort to continuously train and mentor people, you can easily find people that can perform the work better than what you can, and you might even learn something new," says Riaan.

Wise words from big learnings that he embraced in order to succeed. He says, "If you can't learn to delegate certain functions or responsibilities in your business, your business will grow to the maximum of your abilities and time."

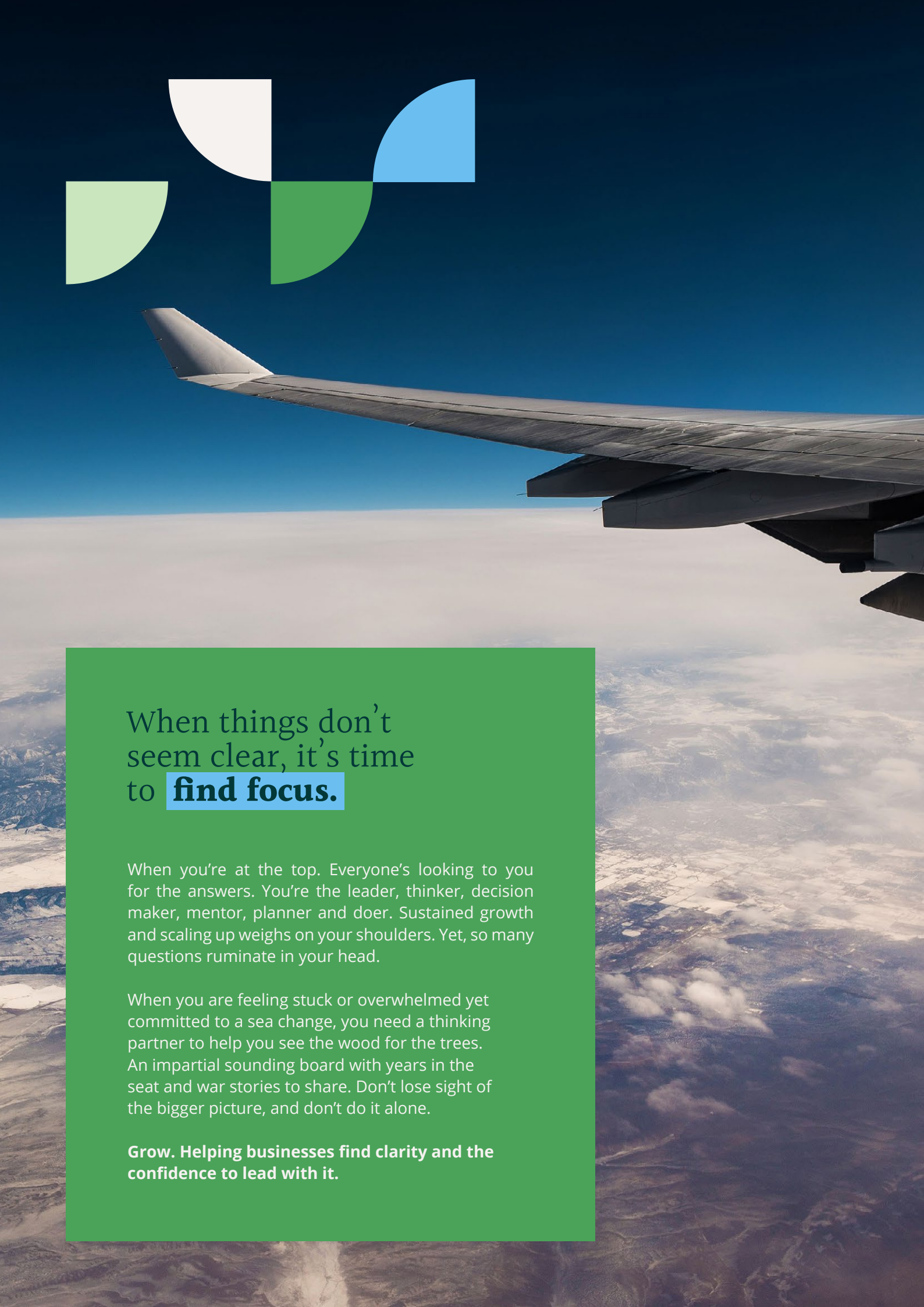

Today Riaan is more comfortable with delegating vital aspects of the business process.

Having a dependable team behind him has fuelled the growth of the business, allowing for growth planning instead of operating reactively. His client base has expanded too, and today RLWA supplies not only home-owners and residential contractors, but also major commercial projects.

Riaan's hope for the future is that RLWA will become a leading competitor in the design, development and implementation of new aluminium fenestration products in the commercial, industrial and residential markets supported by a full in-house turnkey solution to all contractors, developers and clients. With the company's turnover growing from R3 million to R40 million in just a few short years, it looks like Riaan's embracing of solid business processes has proved critical to building positive momentum.



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When things don't seem clear, it's time to **find focus.**

When you're at the top. Everyone's looking to you for the answers. You're the leader, thinker, decision maker, mentor, planner and doer. Sustained growth and scaling up weighs on your shoulders. Yet, so many questions ruminate in your head.

When you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed yet committed to a sea change, you need a thinking partner to help you see the wood for the trees. An impartial sounding board with years in the seat and war stories to share. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture, and don't do it alone.

Grow. Helping businesses find clarity and the confidence to lead with it.



Build your business with **clarity and confidence.**



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