

From the beach to the boardroom – keeping business in balance

Clemi Hardie is not your conventional CEO. She has achieved the desire of many; balancing her passion for the sport of surfing with running UK-based event technology company, Noodle Live. We discover her secret of finding the energy required to succeed yet calmly stay on her feet in both business and personal life...

" When we do our major strategic updates, I will go for a 2-week retreat and surf. I will get 6 hours of surfing in and 8 hours of working in every day. It is where I create my best ideas."

Clemi Hardie maintains the physical and emotional connection to the water that saw her crowned British National Surf Champion and live the life of a semi-pro sports star for 10 years. But these days she is just as likely to be stepping into a company



boardroom as she is to be spending time on a surfboard as CEO of event technology business Noodle Live. With platforms like Xero and Tidy,



 @I_am_word_struck

Michelle Nicol, writer,
Wordstruck writing and training

Michelle is a copywriter, trainer and brand storyteller who helps businesses tell their story through words that attract attention. A former BBC journalist, she loves nosing out a great story and sharing her writing expertise through training and workshops.

Clemi can run her business from anywhere in the world, all she needs is an internet connection.

Getting customer data from events

Noodle Live provide the technology needed to capture attendee data at B2B conference and trade show events for companies that include Google, Deloitte, BT and Fujitsu.

Through a smart choice of mobile apps, on-site registration and RFID/NFC smart badges, their tools not only capture a great cross-section of useful data but also create a great attendee experience which is a win-win for all stakeholders.

Noodle Live's tech is set up to work on events of all shapes and sizes from small intimate product launches for 50 attendees right up to large scale events hosting 15,000 attendees with over 500 sessions and 200 partners.

So how does a surfer from Cornwall end up in the technology business? Clemi's answer takes in a journey of travelling the world, completing a degree and working in online marketing before realising she did not want to work for someone else.

Having seen a Coca-Cola activation which allowed attendees to 'like' physical objects within the event space using RFID wristbands linked to their Facebook account

she explains how she became fascinated by the connection between physical and virtual data: "If we could bring interactions in the physical space into a company's data system, how valuable that could be. And by acknowledging the need to justify the spend required to create those interactions for events, how could we create a platform to map face-to-face interactions into a company's data ecosystem." That's what Noodle Live provides for businesses all over the world.

The challenge of staying afloat

As with many businesses, keeping track of revenue and costs is a big challenge for Noodle Live and Clemi acknowledges that using spreadsheets in their early days was far from an ideal solution: "It was so difficult to gain visibility of where our revenue was coming from – licensing, hardware rental, consumables and on-site staff. We were struggling to understand how much of those we were selling and it was the same on the cost side."

She recalls spending an entire working week manually pulling data out of various systems to get the insight she needed to drive the business forward. The result was profitable but showed that Noodle Live really needed help to continue to manage costs and to grow as a result of this painful analysis,



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Clemi decided to update their pricing model and over the next two quarters Noodle Live increased gross profit margins by 13% which is huge. It was clear to Clemi that Noodle Live needed this kind of insight, but with the increase in number of events, a balance had to be achieved.

Tracking key performance

The Noodle Live management team have now adopted Tidy Enterprise to help keep a close eye on project costs and time. Clemi found that Tidy were really good in the consultation process, taking the time to really understand what Noodle Live were trying to achieve and the challenges in making the platform work for them.

With events and exhibitions taking place all over the world, keeping track of the technology used to deliver the customer data capture has not always been easy. Last year a formula error on a spreadsheet meant that kit did not arrive back from the USA in time and they lost that account, meaning that kind of manual operation process was not suitable for the business or beneficial for the future.

Those kind of missing or late resource errors are now things

of the past thanks to the Tidy Enterprise solution. Clemi says "It has been a great example of working together, as it has been a very collaborative process. Tidy's customer success team have been fantastic to Noodle Live, always going the extra mile doing custom reports and creating lots of different workflows". Now Noodle Live are using it in the management team and cascading it out to the sales and client delivery teams.

Growing business

Over the past 5 years, Noodle Live has grown from just two people to a team of over 20 and is about to expand its offering with a self-service model which will see it working remotely with even more customers and suppliers throughout the world.

As Noodle Live switch from a managed service to self-service options, they are going to be doing more events and need a way to provide quick quotes and delivery, so that GPM is monitored and all projects have visibility from a reporting perspective. That is where Tidy Enterprise fills the gap.

Working with clients that have incredibly high expectations, Noodle Live needed something

that can operationally support the business, whilst Clemi and her team manage those relationships. Clemi explains that they are not experts in operational or job management software, so using Tidy frees up their energy to focus on delivering products rather than on time-consuming but necessary operational processes.

Big thinking space

On Clemi's email signature she is 'Head Of Pencils', a rather unconventional title for a CEO, but one that reflects her personality and the Noodle Live brand... "I don't enjoy the ego business, I just like business," she says. "I'm serious about what I do but I definitely don't take myself too seriously."

That is why, when there is strategic thinking about the future direction of Noodle Live, it is more likely to be done on the snowboard slopes or on a beach after a day's surfing. Tidy is one system that brings everything together so that wherever Clemi is, be it up a mountain or on a beach, she can still run her business effectively and can do so without the business taking over her life.