



JOHN CLEARY

giving businesses A GOOD STIRRING

THE BIG PADDLE COMPANY
DOESN'T HAVE FRANCHISEES –
IT HAS AGITATORS

➔ The first question anyone asks John Cleary about his business is, 'What does the name mean?' Given that he runs The Big Paddle Company, it's a fair question.

'The Big Paddle Company assists business owners with strategic development and business plans,' John explains. 'Our mission is to give business owners the framework to meet their expectations. Stirring and challenging people isn't always comfortable for them, so we call our franchisees "agitators" – and a big paddle is a perfect example of that. Our agitators bring objectivity and, on occasions, brutal honesty to a process that needs focus, discipline and real-world business experience.'

John certainly has the experience. An engineer by training, his career took him into management where he rose to become managing director of Chubb, one of New Zealand's largest security companies. He took on the role of developing The Big Paddle Company here last year partly because he could see the need that many successful business owners have for support at a strategic level, but also because he had faith in the company's abilities – it was founded by his brother Mark.

Mark Cleary created The Big Paddle Company in Australia after a career which included 25 years in advertising and strategic planning as well as owning businesses of his own. As a multiple franchisee with Gloria Jean's, he was a finalist in the *Franchisee of the Year* awards in 2002 so it's not surprising that Big Paddle's client list includes franchisors and franchisees as well as engineering companies, human resources groups, hotels, importers, tilers, solicitors and health care professionals.

'What makes Big Paddle stand out from many coaching and consulting groups is that most of them give their franchisees a system that will resolve a pretty homogenous set of issues,' says John. 'The Big Paddle franchise is about creating and delivering "client-centric" solutions. We expect our agitators to bring their own knowledge, experience and wisdom to bear and to take a more individual approach to helping them analyse their clients' issues. Are their business objectives realistic? Are they measurable? Big Paddle's role is to help companies get where they know they should be going. We make business owners feel uncomfortable sometimes, but we also make them stronger.'

BOLD, INQUISITIVE & EXPERIENCED

The Big Paddle Company is now franchising both in New Zealand and Australia. 'Agitators are unlikely to be under 45 because they need to have been successful at a senior manager or director level,' says John. 'They need to be bold, inquisitive and able to empathise with business owners through having experienced similar issues, whether that's rapid growth, downsizing, refinancing or just being sucked into day-to-day management.' Techniques used include the *Here & Now Review* which establishes expectations and looks at foundation issues, *The Good, The Bad & The Ugly* – interviews with the stakeholder chain, and *Discipline & Direction* agreements that keep all involved on track.

The investment level for franchisees – sorry, agitators – ranges from \$42,500-\$54,500 +gst depending on territory, and includes orientation and integration in the Big Paddle processes. 'We don't talk about training because agitators will already be fully trained through their own histories: what we do is provide the back end; everything from new business prospecting to infrastructure to invoicing so that agitators can focus on clients and doing the business,' John explains. 'Over a 30-40

hour week, agitators should be able to earn well into six figures. We work with a few clients at a time for 6-9 months until the point where we stop adding value. The question we keep asking is, "Are we there yet?"

'The Big Paddle Company franchise is for people who have been there and done it at senior level and now want less stress, less travelling and more fulfilment from sharing their experience with others. Agitators will have a second career matching their lifestyle and building value in New Zealand businesses. If that sounds like you, contact me about becoming an agitator.' ■

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Our Goal
To deliver a world class Business Consulting and Advisory Model through which exceptional business people can take control of their work and their life.

Your Opportunity
To use your wisdom and skills from your first career to develop and control your second.

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