

Spotlight On...

WORK LIFE BALANCE

When Charlotte Perry realised kiwis needed help managing their time, she came up with some savvy ideas about how to get things done. Now she's heading a successful business that minds other people's time.



BY ANGELIQUE JURD

For many of the business people the team at *Business to Business* encounters one of the the greatest challenges to being in business is finding the time for the everyday tasks that seem unimportant until they are forgotten or overdue, when they suddenly become a major problem.

It is understandable in the current business climate that most business owners are more focussed on getting the GST return than on getting the car in for a warrant. Until they find themselves trying to explain to a police officer the reason they don't have a current sticker on the windscreen.

This is where a new style of business known as "lifestyle management" has seen a surge in growth. In fact according to entrepreneur.com the number of such companies is "exploding" as people turn to professionals to help them keep organised, run errands and live a more balanced life.

So, with images of the Meryl Streep's character from *The Devil Wears Prada* making life a misery for her long suffering PA firmly in my mind, I set off to find out more about what a lifestyle manager is and does – and more importantly where I could find one.

Luckily Charlotte Perry, owner of Ponsonby based Charlie's Angels, was more than happy to take some time out of her own busy schedule to help enlighten me.

"We've experienced rapid growth since we started because people are finding there are just not enough



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hours in the day to get everything done," Charlotte said. "People think it's only for rich people and they're really surprised to learn they're actually for everyone.

"Busy people are in search of ways to improve their lifestyle and to regain that elusive "free" time they used to enjoy."

Around 20% of kiwis work at least 50 hours or more a week and nearly half the work force (46%) say they experience work-life conflict.

"We can assist in the home or in the work-place with almost any-

thing. Personal shopping, arranging a party or conference, relocations, having the car serviced, sourcing and supervising trades people like cleaners and plumbers, even de-cluttering your home."

Charlotte's team takes care of everyday tasks and errands that you don't have the time for, or even those ones you simply don't want to do.

It is no different, Charlotte said, than having a cleaner or gardener.

"Lifestyle Managers are commonplace in the UK and USA where surveys show a majority of workers would rather have a personal assistant than a personal trainer and kiwis are starting to suit as they start to put a value on their time – and how they spend that time."

Since launching Charlie's Angels in July 2008, the team has worked on over more than 85 projects help-

ing busy clients with a wide range of tasks.

"Our clients' needs are all so diverse it's important that we offer a broad range of services. In fact, as long as it's legal and ethical, our services are only really limited to people's imaginations. We recently had a client who needed about three years of medical receipts sorted."

Charlotte and her Angels have 'managed', have distributed invitations and managing of RSVP's for 40th birthdays, organised and

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manned a garage sale as a follow up to a house de-clutter project, taken care of grocery shopping and errand running for client with broken ankle, including driving her dog across town for grooming, arranged a storage container and movers to pack household contents before renovations on a house, made bookings and personal appointments for an international client returning to Auckland and managed the set up of a new office, purchasing furniture and arranging IT support to network phones plus managed the lease of an additional room at the new premises.

But what about my image of a wealthy, pampered, dragon lady who simply doesn't want to be bothered with menial tasks? Charlotte assured me it could not be further from the truth.

"Our clients are not just the wealthy but range from young couples who are focusing on their careers, working mums and professionals to retirees who have moved to the sea but still have commitments in the city.

"We strive to make our services affordable; in fact it's probably more a question of can you afford not to employ a lifestyle manager?"

So, I wondered out loud, could Charlie's Angels go to the gym for me – thereby allowing me the time to stay in bed and read stories to my daughter?

"Well we could," laughed Charlotte, "but I don't know if you'd get quite the results you were looking for."