



SPEAKERS

Drew Blackman, Clayton Blackman, Sam Aquilina

Drew Blackman 00:00

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Drew Blackman 00:15

Welcome to the KRGS podcast I'm your host Drew Blackman. The aim of our podcast is to talk to cool people with cool stories. Whether it be our suppliers, customers, staff, other business owners or people from different walks of life and get to know them a little bit better. If you are interested in coming on, drop us a line or email or connect with us on Facebook and we can have a chat to see what we can do. Today's guest is Mr. Sam Aquilina from Think National Shopfitting. Being in the shopfitting industry for over 30 years Sam has seen quite a bit. His company specialises in the fit out and design of pharmacies and medical centres Australia wide, combining an overall package of advisory, design, shop fit and ongoing maintenance. In fact back in 2007, same was KRGS' first customer where we installed a folding closure at Castle Hill homemaker centre. Away from shopfitting Sam enjoys putting his boat in the water and supporting his beloved Cronulla Sharks in the Rugby League. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Mr. Sam Aquilina.

Drew Blackman 01:15

Welcome, Sam to the podcast. Thank you for coming along today.

Sam Aquilina 01:19

Thanks, mate. It's absolute pleasure to be here. privileged.

Drew Blackman 01:23

As I said in the opening 40 years in the shopfitting industry, you must have started when you were about three or four years of age.

Sam Aquilina 01:29

It feels like earlier than that goes in the womb working it all out. But it's been a while.

Drew Blackman 01:35

My what is the Sam Aquilina story?

Sam Aquilina 01:38

Well, in a nutshell, basically, you know, I'm the child of Maltese migrants, their ethos in life is to get your hands dirty, work hard, not so much concentrating on the educational side of things that they're more of a I'm going to mop the floors, but I'm not going to use the mop. I'm going to use my hands and knees and a rag. And of course we grew up with that sort of ethos. You know, I grew up in the in the Shire, basically, a great Cronulla Sharks supporter us for the very first game at Sutherland Oval. And of course 2016 Grand Final. It's very important to me,

Drew Blackman 02:14

of course you How could you forget that?

Drew Blackman 02:15

Forget, moved to Perth in the 80s lived there for about 18 years and came back to Sydney 2000 Mainly to do with business that I had had a warehouse here had to promote three grown children, three adult children and a wife and two dogs. That's me in a nutshell.

Drew Blackman 02:36

Very nice. I have actually met your your two dogs. They are part of the office there security two terrorising a miniature dashians Yes, though, the luck you to death before you can get in the door.

Sam Aquilina 02:49

Well, a prerequisite to actually work for us and with us. Is that. Do you like dogs? If it's a no, it's a see ya later.

Drew Blackman 02:57

It's a tough, tough gig.

Sam Aquilina 02:58

Yeah, absolutely.

Drew Blackman 03:00

So about 40 years in the industry. How did you start in the shopfitting industry?

Sam Aquilina 03:04

Well, look way back in the day, I did pretty well at school. Back in the day, my parents were keen for me to go out and earn a living. As Maltese migrants traditionally, they the harder you work, the more money you earn, apparently. And yeah, it was sort of like, get out there and work. And as a teenager having my own money, had its attraction really, you know, I thought I was going to be a chef initially, I worked

on that for about six months. And it's working the weekends, in a hot busy kitchen, working weekends. All mates out having fun. And I thought that this is not for me. So I took on Carpentry Joinery, and I started working with a shopfitting company. And that's the history from there on was in shopfitting and of course there was more night work in that and out of hours work in the chef industry. And I didn't realise that at the time. But as things progressed, obviously, that's what happened. After being a chef, I still wouldn't mind being a chef actually come to think of it but on the side I think I'll just keep that for the moment. You know, I completed the carpentry joint joinery course at GyMEA TAFE as we do and during the day, a carpenter carpenter and joiner was actually the basis of a shopfitter. In those days, things have changed. Yeah. They've got shopfitting courses, which is specific but back in those days, it was just a carpetener and joiner, who could build a house or you know, multi storey building or, or simple joinery work, you know, so I went down that track. I also went, went on after my five years apprenticeship with Dan Rove interiors. I did further course did the Clark Works course, which is basically what they call the building course now That's a three year diploma course at TAFE. Again, while I was there, one of my mates who I'd known for many years, he was actually doing the course as well. And we decided to go out on our own and, and went straight into building houses, framing and roofing. Second fixing that sort of thing. Now that only lasted about eight, nine months, and he's got a bit of a story in that one and probably was the turning point of building houses wasn't for me. When you put frames together, you basically tapped them together and then after you level things up, you you'd now them home strong and keep them together. We were putting our last frame up. In this house, we'd spent probably two or three days putting frames up in this house. And my mate missed a step on the joists. And of course, we fallen over didn't hurt ourselves. apart from our egos. It wasn't funny at the time. The frame hit one of the frames, which hit another frame, which hit another frame and the whole damn house came down like

Drew Blackman 06:08

there's like dominoes. Yes, it was.

Sam Aquilina 06:11

We just sat there and laughed and laughed and laughed, and then cried and cried this who had to do it all again. So yeah, hopped into shopfitting, I actually went off on my own again. And actually it was on my own. For myself, my first company and it was called Aquiline Kitchens and Bathrooms. Okay, we also did some shopfitting work, but it was predominantly working in someone's home their castle. Yeah, building kitchens and bathrooms and fit outs, all that sort of thing. So I learned a bit from that, because dealing with someone's kingdom, home is difficult because you know, what, if you do something wrong or half wrong, you know they are on to you about

Drew Blackman 06:51

Mr. And Mrs. Jones? Yes.

Sam Aquilina 06:53

Absolutely driven by the the lady of the house, usually Yes. And then, then I decided to get out of that had a bit of a bad experience. I actually learned a lot from that way, when you come out in the in the business and the only young whippersnapper, you don't really see and understand what happens in the business world. And of course, is builder that take advantage of you and customers that can take

advantage of you. And so I learned a lot from that process. Yes. So I decided to get back into the shopfitting industry specific and I job as a setter out for a well known company called Odlin International. And it was there that I learned so much about the shopfitting industry in real terms. I've got to say Jim Odlin brought to Australia, something that most shopfitters hadn't seen in Australia. And that was a little bit of professionalism to the industry. And I learned to set out on paper basically. So we would set out it wouldn't be on a stick where you'd mark out your cutting this from this markup. It was all on paper. So it was a big technical drawing thing. So basically, you're an architect detail drawing these days, of course, it's all done a computer, which is the same same theory, but not quite because with we would do things in full scale. So it was to the millimetre It was absolutely perfect. I learnt systems purchasing systems that were specific to shop fitting, and that two and a half years that I spent with the Odlin International. So went into site, I was like leading site jobs, leading him on site jobs and supervising and project managing estimate. So I was really lucky because Jim took a liking to me and, and sort of gave me those opportunities where I I saw every part of the business yes, except for the sales part. That was more Jim's and others at the time. After spending two and a half years there, I just saw I saw an ad in the paper actually. And this was just after Australia II won the Americas Cup

Drew Blackman 09:17

82 - 83 or something like that

Sam Aquilina 09:19

It was at 82- 83 a year. And I saw an ad for house land in Perth for like \$30,000 Now even then that was dirt cheap. Yes, you know, and we're talking on the water basically. And I thought this can't possibly be so I investigated and I decided that I would go to Perth and have a look around which I did and loved it. And at the same time I applied for a job while I was over there, got the job and started working with a company called Associated Shopfitters which is a well renowned shopping company over there. they have before I started somewhere between 100 and 130 140 people working for them at one stage, and this is early 80s. This is early 80s. Oh, they didn't have that, that, that those numbers in it was probably down to about 80 or 90. Wow, still? Yeah, absolutely. But every shop fitter in Western Australia happened to be an apprentice and have gone through that system, their system. So I spent about 18 months with them, and they're still good mates as well. I learned a lot and how things worked over there. And what I found out with WA, was that it was way behind why WA stands for wait a while. And it really means it really happens. Like you're to something like carpet, for example. And it would take, they'd say it would take 10 days to get there. So we're here in New South Wales and on the eastern border, you'd get it you can get the next day, back then not quite so much these days. But it never took 10 days because when it was 10 days up, you find out that our sorry, my your carpet, we actually sold that someone on the eastern states. And you're gonna have to wait another month for you know, so that was a sort of scenario in WA

Drew Blackman 11:14

and you're trying to open up a shop to get a trading in the customers paying rent. You're waiting on carpet.

Sam Aquilina 11:19

I was very excited. Yeah. roller shutters were easy to get. Yes. But they weren't rollershutters they were they were mainly roller door doors, yes. grills, you know, way back in the day. You guys know a lot about that. So the 18 months with Associated, then I moved on to another company called Lees, Lees shopfitting. And they concentrated on pharmacies and newsagencies, hence my affiliation and love for the pharmacy Would you believe, Oh, pharmacy installations. It was run by banker. And that rhymes with many things. But he didn't have much regard for shop fitters, even though that was the industry that he was in, he was born shop for any company thought he'd make money. But what he was really good at was marketing. Right? And, and knowing how to sell and into a niche market. And that's where I learned a lot of what I have today, the beginnings of understanding. How do you sell a job? Yes, what sells a job. It's not just, yeah, we can make something anyone can do that. It's getting to that stage to make it and all the behind the scenes thing. Things that that make it real and make it happen, that people don't normally see and shoppers don't normally do. Yes. I learned a lot from him. And I became General Manager, that company was there for about three and a half years. At the same time, we start up a retail business in what is now a Westfield Shopping Shopping Centre at Witford City. And, and we had that for a few years and my wife was then was into, into fashion and we started up a children's boutique. So I was learning about retail, the other side of world and its challenges. So all these combined things that I've learned over the years. I mean, I just didn't have the ability I learned from experienced people and trying things out myself. Now when you do that. trying things out for yourself. It's what I call the school of hard knocks Yes. Because me being of Mediterranean extraction. Don't listen to people and have learned to listen, but only recently, but it's take me 40 years to get Yes. So using the all these experiences, moved on to another company called Focus shopfitters, which was a shop fitting division using all my knowledge that I had learned in the eastern states and you know, about marketing and all that sort of thing. And we actually grew the company to be the biggest in WA. In this time I was I became a partner as well. So because I, you know, obviously love what I what I did, and I did well for the company and I became partner. We was one day I actually went out into the factory. And there were these faces I just didn't know. And lo and behold, that was the day that we said if we are business. And we had about 90-98 people at that time, a real machine. Yes, certainly. So, you know, in building up and helping being an integral part in building that business, though, in the heydays, you know, the late 80s early 90s was really good for shopping, retailers. We're making a lot of money shopfitters We're making a lot of money and it was easy money.

Drew Blackman 14:56

Was that the sort of the boom time over there in Perth as well.

Sam Aquilina 14:59

Absolutely. Well, sorry, it was the boom time for retail and business. Yes, but the domestic side of it, and the resource size came a little bit later. Right. And that was more in the late 90s to early 2000s. When, when all the resource, or? Yeah, the resource industry became a major part minerals, that sort of thing. Yep. I left after about 10 years and reluctantly in one hand, but really excited in another. I was investigating a module shop fitting system from Italy. Yes. And I, which was called km. And I invited some partners. In fact, the, the people from their own came one of the partners for so we could actually say we manufactured. And I took that on and basically started from scratch. Sitting in a warehouse with stock hadn't arrived. We were just beginning. We hadn't even built the office yet. And I was sitting on back then there were yellow pages. Yes, there was the business one or the and then there was the

domestic domestic though. I put those together, and they were high enough for a seat for me. And I just had note pad. Yes. And I thought what the hell oh and a phone, What the hell? How am I going to keep this up, even though I hadn't been able to do. And there's another that I learned a lot from because the way I was told or how how it sold in Europe is different. They didn't understand our market, but they were telling us how to do how to do it. Yes, and just didn't work. And it was by we go to the shop fitters to sell them shelves. That's what they do in Europe, in Europe. And in states as well. Because Shopfitters over in this in the UK, don't make their own shelves right back then in the 80s and 90s. A shop fitter here makes her own shelves, because that's how they earn money. You know, they make it out of melamine and not so much metal. And so we tried to sell like that, to the to the shop fitters just didn't work to the architects, it didn't work, then we realised it was, it had to be sold directly to the retailer, who would then tell the shop fitter, this is what I want, this is what we're using. It's a bit like doors, you know, we, as you know, we use KRGS we think they're their products. Excellent. And it's very well priced. And services are second to none. We sold KM to the retailers and the best retailers, the most suitable retailers were actually pharmacists, or pharmacies. And that's what we targeted. And hence, that's where it grew into a business where you know, the the brands would say we want to use km, one of the first brands was actually Amcal. From there, I had a bit of a we'll call it a boardroom Biff. And even though I was the managing director, and I founded the company, I actually had to leave the company. Right now it was a bit of a dark, dark age for me. It went on for about a few years. And I was quite unsettled with all that and disgruntled look it happen. But that's something I learned again, too, because what I wasn't good at was watching my back. Yes. And you know, a lot of that happens. You got to it's, it's not all good. There's a lot of bad things that can affect your life. And there's a lot of good things too. But I look what I learned from that was that you've got to watch what other people are doing around you. I just solely I get so dedicated, and into what I'm doing that I forget what's happening on the outside. Yes. And that's something that's it's a lesson learned, you know, and I've I take that on board now. And I'm leading up to what we do as Think National. So after a few years in doing bits and pieces, I actually worked 12 months as a project manager for Telstra, rather looking after their, the rollout of their the licenced Telstra stores around Australia. And that was interesting. It was the easiest job I've ever had. They had a department where they had about 12 people that really only one person needed to be there. We were all getting very good money for not doing anything. Yes. I enjoyed that for 12 months it was 12 months contract that was like a rest and getting my act together. For a few things, so I got back into shop fitting. And that was in 2005. Okay. Yeah. And yeah, and then, you know, Think National came from there really?

Drew Blackman 20:14

Excellent. So tell us about Think National. So that's your business now, how many employees do you have in? Did it just start out focusing on pharmacies and medical centres? Or were you doing everything? Or was it just mainly in that area?

Sam Aquilina 20:29

Okay. With Think National actually started off, there was three of us, two designers and myself, the designers had done me design many pharmacies and understood the behind the scenes and how pharmacy works and all that sort of thing. I had a reasonable idea, but not the designing. That wasn't my forte. My forte was as project management, site installation installations and getting anything to do with the shop fit, organised, whether it be you cat one works all the way through to the finished product.

The three of us started called Think Australia, and then we decided to change the name to Thick National, and that was about 11 or 12 years ago, that the designers were based in Perth. And we had about six designers over there. And the construction part of the shopping side was based out of Sydney. So the aim was to create a like a niche market where we specialised in pharmacy and medical centres. And it was like a one stop shop with a designer to fit out. But unfortunately, we weren't. We're not working as a real team as such. Yeah. And there are two distinct arms with the design on one side, the project managers on the other side, it got to them and us scenario. Yes. And it's it's how it develops from something small becomes big, it's infectious. So you've got one side being the design, and look, design and engineering have always had issues to this day and sales, sales and engineering. Always an issue because sales and is out to sell something cheap. Basically design is to get something drawn up that works. But engineers look at it or shopfitters will look at it Oh, that can't work it. That's a never ending story. never ending battle here. So when you've got two sets of people who only single mindedly think their job design, me in the shop fitting and the process of shop fitting, you're going to have some issues we did. So what I did was, in the end, I ended up buying these guys out. And the best thing I've ever done. I mean, the guys were okay, but it just wasn't going to work. So what we did was retain our designers, a couple of designers in Sydney and we kept it under one roof. That is the best thing that was ever done. Isolate that keep the design focused on what on the pharmacists needs what they really need, because the pharmacists don't even really know what they want. Okay, so you've got all these challenges around and what the designers learned from us. So being right there is the shot fitting, so what needed to be done so we can look at a job before it goes out and about we will get these things organised. So that when we do a detailed drawing, that it's actually a absolutely a detailed drawing that can be attended on which reduces the variations at the end of the job

Drew Blackman 23:35

we have. We just have been interrupted folks by our Managing Director, Clayton Blackman from KRGS Doors, who does have a good radio head. He's just joined us so welcome Clayton

Clayton Blackman 24:03

very important person.

Sam Aquilina 24:04

So a Radio head is one that you don't show your face. Is that correct?

Drew Blackman 24:09

Correct. He's got a good head for radio.

Sam Aquilina 24:11

school of hard knocks.

Clayton Blackman 24:15

Sorry, for my lateness, Sam.

Sam Aquilina 24:21

Well, it's thank goodness your jobs aren't like that.

Clayton Blackman 24:24

Had to go see the doc mate Yeah.

Drew Blackman 24:26

Did you get that rash cleaned up? Good to hear that rash? Yes.

Clayton Blackman 24:32

I've go to go back next Friday.

Drew Blackman 24:33

Yes. But keep the swelling. Is

Sam Aquilina 24:35

that what you're just gonna paint it off? Painted off?

Clayton Blackman 24:39

How are you Samuel?

Sam Aquilina 24:40

I'm very well, good to see you. yourself Apart from the rash.

Clayton Blackman 24:44

What's going on?

Drew Blackman 24:45

We were just talking Sam, just so much about how things started. So it's been very interesting so far,

Clayton Blackman 24:53

Look at the notes his got here preparation. Preparation is key. Preparation Prevents piss poor performance. You know that Sam

Sam Aquilina 25:00

it doesn't apparently allegedly,

Drew Blackman 25:01

the five Ps or the six PS

Sam Aquilina 25:03

this was a there was no words that you shouldn't use prior to this gentleman arriving? Piss poor

Drew Blackman 25:13

Yes. Okay, so you feel loosened up now? Yeah so it has gone down hill. But that's fine. That's that's the type of podcast we want my relaxed, feel comfortable.

Sam Aquilina 25:27

It's not a family show then

Drew Blackman 25:29

no we put explicit rating up if the kids want to listen to it the kids listen to it. There's no control so this day and age the kids actually use worse language than us. Yeah, sure. So where were we? So you brought the designers in house? Yeah,

Sam Aquilina 25:44

in house. And that really worked like a charm working in with the with the construction people, project managers, you know, we'd be showing them how things really should be done.

Clayton Blackman 25:55

Do you feel this? Having those designer Sam helps you steer the job from go to Whoa,

Sam Aquilina 26:00

it does in most cases, but that's changing. Yeah. Because of the economic environment out there. People want more, for less, and they don't want to pay for it. So that's another subject.

Clayton Blackman 26:13

It's a different show. Yeah, that's a different podcast.

Drew Blackman 26:16

Let's say I said, Saturday morning money show. Exactly right.

Clayton Blackman 26:21

How many designers you got?

Sam Aquilina 26:22

Well, okay, we've actually reduced in our staff. Okay, so we had three designers that were kind of permanent, we've got one, and she's on maternity leave at the moment, however, in saying that, because of the way businesses at the moment, it's very tight. So you're going to change with the times to accommodate for that. And in what we do in our business. You will know I was talking about focus 97 people, I was talking, yeah, other companies, we had something like 15 people doing what we're doing now. Yeah, with three of us. Yeah, we're down three people. But what I'm doing is a lot of the staff that I've had, particularly in design, actually working for me on contract. Yeah. And they aren't they still understand what we do. That's the trick. I suppose the the downside of that is, you can't sort of flick your finger and say I want it done now. Instead, it gets done tomorrow. But what I have got control of is dollars, the dollars. Yeah. Which is really important. The bottom line, and I think you've touched on having staff is one of the biggest challenges. For many reasons, we all know, those don't have to go through them. It's just hard work usually. And it could be from either side of the coin. And this way, by reducing staff, it gives you a refreshed head. Look, there's a lot of things that have changed in that area in the resource area, resources are always an issue. But so much of it is going overseas, particularly

with design, and not so much the client direct contact, which you must have designed because, yeah, people like people to people still, you know, over the, over the internet or

Drew Blackman 28:10

over email over the phone that breaks down it

Sam Aquilina 28:13

so so we still have that, you know, outsource, you know, like the detailing and all that sort of thing, you know, and and that works really well. And it is more cost effective. Which is the other good thing.

Drew Blackman 28:26

Okay. So going back, you said you learn a little about marketing and things like that. How does Think, now advertise to get all the new clients or is it all existing clients return clients? Or is it done through knocking on doors and going in that sense,

Sam Aquilina 28:44

we actually invest in the pharmacy industry. Okay, and how do we do that? Well, we go, we support them at conferences. We support them by going to trade trade shows, APP, which is a very large one in in on the Gold Coast. Broadbeach is massive. And we've been there for the last seven or eight years. And it's really good for us and it's also good for the customer as well. So that's where we get a lot of our leads from. We also we never advertise in a magazine. Occasionally, if someone asked us to do a specific project for them, whether they're looking at pharmacies and shop fitting in they'll ask us to do a little bit of a spread we'll do that sort of thing. But it usually relates to a conference that's coming up and that works well. The other thing is actually working within the industry that is being major in shop fitting generally we would work with other shop fitters, you know, but in our industry in the pharmacy and Medical Centre, we deal a lot with and we work in with a lot of the suppliers like the dispensing, dispensing robot We work with those people? And they work with us. So, and it's, it's not all about, I've got a job for you give me some money that doesn't work, people do it. And then they often say, Look, if you get this job, I'll give you \$1,000, you know, help us with this. Now, it's just a matter of a lead. Yeah, and helping each other works much better. So we do that, on a social media side of things. That's fairly important. We probably don't do it as well as what we could. Because that's another. I call it an expense. But it's not really an expense. It's actually it's time. It's time It's time to be able to do absolutely. And what we do is, LinkedIn has been phenomenal for us.

Drew Blackman 30:41

For businesses, I feel that's a big key. But then again, people say all my customers aren't on social media, you have a look. Everyone's on social media, our mum and dad, they're on Facebook, like they're, they're 80 years of oge 75 80 years old. They're on Facebook. So saying your customers aren't on Facebook, everyone's there on social media.

Sam Aquilina 31:02

Yeah, absolutely. I actually joined LinkedIn on its early days, as well. And, and my thought was right, I don't really want everyone to know what I'm doing, particularly competitors. They're cool. You got to, you've got to sort of guard that to a certain degree. It catches up eventually, but and I just simply

connected with pharmacists, pharmacists, pharmacists, yeah, anything to do with pharmacy or, or supplier, the pharmacy, industry and all that sort of thing. And that, and that really is what keeps us going. However, in saying that word of mouth, you just can't be Yes, from that comes word of mouth, you know, and, and I have to say that, without our repeat customers, we will be nothing, because getting the new customers these days, is much harder, much harder. And it's getting to a stage now where it's almost in this sort of in this business, you have to change daily, in how you deliver a job, how you get a job, because it changes. You know what we did five years ago, you'd think that's like ancient now. Technology is moving so quick. I mean, that's been an absolute technology. And our industry has really changed the ways in how we do things. So back in the days, we plan print to give to people that price. Yeah, you'd have to run it through one of those chemical machinery, you'd have known wore masks, but they should have at the time because it smelt then you'd have to get it posted or they'd be picked up. You go for all this paper. And then by the time you done that the plans are changed anyway. Yes. And you'd have to redo it again. Yes. You know, that was hard work. That took up a lot of the time, then the fax machine came in, and you've got that, that machine that you'd have to photocopies of the paper because of the it it would fade off. Yeah, three and a half days. And we thought that was magic, because our it sped up the process. And now I think that was early 80s. Mid 80s. Actually, yeah, when that happened, boy, I'm going back now. And and then we got into computers, and we're right into that and emails, you know, you can get instant replies in our this is gonna be so easy. In fact, it made things a lot harder, I believe because everyone expects us to happen,

Clayton Blackman 33:25

which is automatic. Now some people say, Well, I've sent you an email. Yeah, right. Yeah. i But you

Sam Aquilina 33:33

only copy me and you didn't send it to me.

Clayton Blackman 33:34

But you were all we're all sitting around waiting for everyone to send emails. Exactly.

Drew Blackman 33:39

I find we technology the biggest thing we go to site and you're kind of the Sam that in the past, they'd have to look at the plans and the big A1 printed hanging up on the clothes rack type of thing. Now they got the little laptop or the little I pad and they walk around site with it. Yeah, yep. This is what this should look like. And this is what that should look like.

Sam Aquilina 33:58

I mean, there's some great things happening. But it's it seems to be ahead. By the time people get a grip of it good work, there is an example. That is yes. And just rang up to say that technology is working right we can open the shop because the roller doors not working. And not at this time. And we need someone right now.

Clayton Blackman 34:24

No, this time of day. Okay. No, no, it'd

Sam Aquilina 34:27

be first thing in the morning. Exactly. Or at nighttime. Yeah.

Drew Blackman 34:30

That was just a sound effect on cue to let you know technology still working.

Sam Aquilina 34:34

Okay. Was it was that my time or something?

Drew Blackman 34:39

Okay,

Clayton Blackman 34:40

our next guest Yeah.

Drew Blackman 34:43

So on that, what do you attribute your success to?

Sam Aquilina 34:47

Okay. This is interesting. I actually asked my wife this to this question the other day, and some of the things that she said the make sense? It's funny a woman is a woman behind a man. So works it out. I think you've got one. You got one? Yes, we've got that. Which is really good. But you know, one of the things is persistence. You know, the hardest thing is when you get a knock is to go, jeez, that's too hard. But you just have to be persistent. What you do. You got to have someone behind you that's supporting you as well.

Clayton Blackman 35:30

Yeah. Which you've got?

Sam Aquilina 35:31

Oh, absolutely.

Clayton Blackman 35:32

Your hard work? Is your your key to success?

Sam Aquilina 35:35

Absolutely. I'm so looking at some notes trying to get the exact words my wife, my good wife used, and I must have deleted it.

Drew Blackman 35:46

fell on deaf ears.

Clayton Blackman 35:49

That's how good it was

Sam Aquilina 35:49

Yeah. It's persistence. And when you get knocked down, you got to come back and not take things personally. Yeah, because, you know, industry. Ethics, I believe has gone down into the toilet. And the reason for that I believe is okay, kind of the reason for that is, because things are tough out there financially, like pharmacy industry. The things that affected the pharmacy industry, PBS issues, were about nine years ago, the decision was made by the government to change what what the PBS was. And on your average pharmacy, they would lose on 150 scripts per day would lose something like \$90,000. Net worth of the of the yearly income. So if you're doing 1000 scripts a day, you're talking half a million, which is major. Yeah. So change, being able to change quickly, is important in our industry, you know, so to the success of the business has been that we've had to change quickly. And you can't do that with a big organisation. It's like a massive ship the Titanic to turn that around, would take three mile. Yeah, before you could turn it around. But if you've got a small company, and you've got control of that company, that's another issue, particularly in what we do that some people call it. micro management, but I believe that it's, it's part of that you really need because if you leave it in the hands of others, you don't have that control. And you will have issues because they're not invested. Yes, doesn't matter how much they get paid. They're not invested. And they haven't got the passion that you have small business to change with the times you kind of like in a speedboat, which you can do on a sixpence and you can change it around quickly. But you have to have the head to do that as well. So I believe that the success is is persistence, not you know, standing up to the knocks coming back. Yeah. And having someone behind you supporting you and someone that when you're down in the dumps, give me a wake up call and say, Hey, you chose this Yeah, get back up, get back up and do it. You know, and that's really hard to do sometimes.

Drew Blackman 38:12

Away from work mate. How do you relax

Sam Aquilina 38:14

fishing, fishing I love my boat I wish I would use it more. But I live pretty close to the to Botany Bay. Ramps, three minutes away. Dropping a boat in fishing occasionally a game of golf, rarely, not nearly enough. And would you believe something that I've really taken into which I never thought I would, I discovered Netflix and Stan. And that's pretty interesting stuff to Yes. Yeah. So I can relax here at night. And unfortunately, you're getting to something really good. You're there till two in the morning watching it and then getting up early to

Clayton Blackman 38:54

episode after episode is beautiful.

Drew Blackman 38:57

What's your latest Netflix or stan show that you're on

Sam Aquilina 38:59

watching these cartels?

Clayton Blackman 39:01

Yeah, how good they are

Sam Aquilina 39:03

They're fantastic. I don't know if it's a death or like and shooting and all that sort of thing. But the business is El Chapo. El Chapo. He was a great one. That was a while ago. I'm watching another one now called what's called Queen of the South. Yeah. Excellent. Yes. And that's a Mexican cartel. Yeah. Yeah, that now another one another good one is do with the president United States and everyone died and they had to use a backup president to run the country and he ended up being a really good prisoner. And what's the name of it? It'll come to me, but I haven't got at the moment. And yeah, but yeah, spending spending much time with my dogs. Would you believe I really, dogs are all part of a part of my life.

Clayton Blackman 39:52

You've got two dashhounds,

Sam Aquilina 39:53

miniature dashhounds

Sam Aquilina 39:55

and terrorise.

Clayton Blackman 39:57

One of them's called peanut

Sam Aquilina 39:58

and the other one's called Monte. Monte real name is we change them because they rescue dogs, we only get rescue dogs and help them out the hard work because, you know, they may have been mistreated back in the day, or that sort of things, but yet it's not peanut It was walnut or something like, it wasn't walnut but was a nut name. So but we call the Monte because it just says, seem to suit her even though Monte is a boys name.

Clayton Blackman 40:30

but they're there forever with you, like you get in your office and they're there. They're part of the family.

Sam Aquilina 40:35

Well, saying early on, when we have new employees. At the interview, one of the questions is Do you like dogs and you know what, they actually helped make us decision on who we get. Because usually dog people are, in my opinion, have a different type of nature. And because they're not to have a dog, or an animal, then description you can't be selfish. And yeah, yeah, sometimes I take a bit more of your time.

Clayton Blackman 41:02

And your dogs, actors, security guards at your office to at the front, they when they come in,

Sam Aquilina 41:07

they slowly up. They've got a name in the in the complex. They know one. Better so good. Yeah, that's good.

Drew Blackman 41:16

Right. Well, to finish it off, we ask all our guests our Fast Five questions.

Sam Aquilina 41:20

Yes. Okay.

Drew Blackman 41:22

And the first question is, what would be your last meal?

Sam Aquilina 41:28

Okay. Well, I really like Angel pasta, garlic, prawns and lemon.

Drew Blackman 41:35

Now, going back, you mentioned before earlier that you started out as a chef. I'm going to add a question in here. So it's going to be the Fast Six. what's your what's your go to meal from your chef days that you still cook now?

Sam Aquilina 41:51

Two minute noodles,

Drew Blackman 41:52

noodles kind of stuff. Then I had the last one where you can actually overcook them and go for three minutes.

Sam Aquilina 41:59

Oh, let it run dry. Yeah. Let's see what you can actually do it that is add all these different things into it. You know, like mushrooms and chicken. All of a sudden it becomes a really good meal.

Sam Aquilina 42:11

Yes. Yes. Your drink of choice.

Sam Aquilina 42:15

Water.

Drew Blackman 42:16

Water?

Sam Aquilina 42:18

If that's not available, single malt scotch,

Drew Blackman 42:21

your favourite holiday destination?

Sam Aquilina 42:24

Okay, well, locally. I'm kind of like going to, to Culburra. Yes, we we rent a place for someone we know down there quite regularly. And it's right on the water. It's just glorious. And I get to do a bit of beach fishing and it's like four and a half steps away and good night's great grades but otherwise, yeah. And the other places my home country being Malta home country it's my parents home country and I'm going there in a couple of months actually.

Drew Blackman 42:56

Okay, how often do you

Sam Aquilina 42:58

not that often I might go once every four or five years

Drew Blackman 43:03

and you've still got family over the

Sam Aquilina 43:05

year mate we Aquilina's breed like rabbits and rabbit happens to be the the one of the main foods of Malta yet there's a lot of rabbit in the food.

Drew Blackman 43:18

And then the chocolate the Maltesers

Sam Aquilina 43:20

No, no. Okay. No, it's no connection. No connection.

Clayton Blackman 43:25

And they all drive a falcon. Yes.

Sam Aquilina 43:28

Yeah, no. I did have one that's true. There's a fancy one. Malta is a great destination. Yeah, it's it's like the Greek Isles but better. My opinion

Drew Blackman 43:44

very nice. Any tattoos?

Sam Aquilina 43:47

Definitely. No, my I've got too much. I'm just took way too hairy Yeah, yes. The needle wouldn't get through.

Sam Aquilina 43:52

Not even a Cronulla Sharks. 2016 Premiership tattoo.

Sam Aquilina 43:56

I thought about that. But the only patch without hair was a little part on my back. I need to show I need to show it.

Drew Blackman 44:05

Yes. Oh, that's near Clayton's just showing us he's a St George Dragons tattoo, which is on his chest that you need to know a little Do people know that it started out as a neck tattoo. And with age and gravity, it's now down on his chest. And our final question, if heaven does exist, what would God say when you arrived at the pearly gates?

Sam Aquilina 44:28

Mate here's your fishing rods. And your two dogs are here waiting for you.

Clayton Blackman 44:34

I welcome you with open arms.

Sam Aquilina 44:35

Absolutely.

Drew Blackman 44:37

Well, Sam, thank you very much for joining us on the KRGS podcast. That has been an absolute pleasure listening to your story. And we'll get you on again very shortly. Thanks very much.

Sam Aquilina 44:47

Great. And don't call me shortly. Sure.

Drew Blackman 44:50

Not to worry. Thanks very much. Sam. That wraps up our chat with Sam Aquilina from Think National shopfitting If you're liking the podcast Give them a rating on your preferred listening channel. Not only does it boost our show, it also boosts my ego. Again, thanks for listening and as always, you could be anywhere in the world but you're here with us. Thanks again. Till next time, cheers. The KRGS doors show proudly brought to you by KRGS Doors for all your shopfront roller shutters, roller grilles, folding closures and bifold doors, visit www.krgsdoors.com.au

Sam Aquilina 45:26