

Good company

When Jamie Pherous met Laura Ruffles in London on a business trip, he knew she could help take his Corporate Travel Management business to the world stage



She balances a global role with a family, including four young children, and doesn't miss a beat



Laura Ruffles (38)

CEO Australia/ New Zealand
Corporate Travel Management

Jamie is genuinely passionate about everything he does – whether it's heli-skiing huge mountains in Alaska, surf trips with his friends or his business – his energy is extraordinary.

It's no secret that the success he and CTM have achieved means he can spend his time pursuing any wild activity he chooses, but he loves the challenge of building something tangible and sharing that success with his team.

Despite his dedication to his job, he always makes sure his business success is not at the expense of what's most important to him: his family.

He often gets out of the office and spends time with his boys. He can be on the other side of the world and will stop what he's doing to call home to see how one of his sons has done in a test or footy match.

It was that passion and enthusiasm that convinced me to accept the job. When Jamie first approached me to come on board, I was working for American Express and had no intention of leaving my job. But he shared with me his vision to take what was at the time a small private business owned by a handful of employees and float the company, taking it public. It was a huge opportunity to come in at the ground floor

and build the business with him. The last five-and-a-half years since I joined have been exciting. We've seen the company expand firstly into New Zealand and now into more than 45 cities in 23 countries worldwide. But we never stop working on new ways to be the very best. I think that's where Jamie and I have got a really good working relationship. We both share a similar work ethic and never really switch off, which enables us to make decisions quickly.

We both go out to see customers, spend time with travel consultants and hearing people's ideas with a real divide and conquer strategy. He thinks around the entrepreneurial, opportunistic big picture and I really add the execution to things.

What's really great is that, 99 per cent of the time, we think alike and ask the same questions. That really gives me the confidence in how we move forward on a daily basis.



The success he and CTM have achieved means he can spend his time pursuing any wild activity he chooses



Jamie Pherous (46)

Managing director
Corporate Travel Management

A lot of leaders say success is surrounding yourself with good people and I couldn't agree more. Laura is a dynamo and really integral to the business.

I met her on a business trip to London and I was really impressed by her. She was just so positive, full of energy and articulate. I came back from that trip and I said to myself, "I've got to get Laura into this business".

She was working for a global company at the time and I went down to Sydney to interview her and she just looked at me and said "Look, if you're trying to employ me I'm just letting you know I've got a pretty good career path in this business I'm in".

I went back to Brisbane with my tail between my legs but as we were planning the next year I just felt she was really important to our growth strategy.

As it turns out, I was able to sell her on the business, how it could work and how she could fit in – the rest is history.

Our working relationship is quite different to most. Most leaders look for someone with complementary skills but I would say we're very similar and that's what makes it work so well.

We have unconditional trust in each other, which is important in a senior

leadership team and 99 times out of 100 we will look at things, respond to things and make decisions in exactly the same way.

Her commitment to everything she values is unbelievable. She balances a global role with a family, including four young children, and doesn't miss a beat.

That commitment to her family is evident in the little things.

She'll be clear that she can't take a meeting at a particular time because she is doing the school drop-off that morning – it's important to her and respected within our business.

Earlier this year, she had her fourth child and was back at work three weeks later because she wanted to be back in the job.

We've had an amazing growth story and are now one of the top corporate travel companies in the world. Not bad for something that started with just two people in Brisbane when I was 23.

Since we've listed, we've grown tenfold in five years but we have a long way to go if we want to be the best in the world.

We're working hard and sticking it to the big boys. That's what gets me out of bed in the morning, it makes this job fun.

Laura has been a champion of innovation and change and while it has been tough with lots of travelling and sleep deprivation, we always have a good laugh and I think that's really important.

I don't take myself too seriously; that's my secret to getting through this business. Laura is very much the same. We have some good tear-jerking laughs, that's for sure.