



BEN FIDDEN, MY HOME WATCH

A love of pets, gardening and real estate has proved to be the perfect foundation for Ben Fidden's new business

The former training manager had spent 10 years in the field of learning development and was ready to move away from hours locked in front of his computer. Ben was keen to get out of the office and into his own business.

The solution turned out to be buying a franchise in the My Home Watch network.

"I always wanted to jump into my own business, but I didn't know what to do, and with the capital required and the marketing, it wasn't feasible," he explains.

Ben came across My Home Watch after a holiday absence that left his cat highly stressed. He immediately looked for an alternative to leaving his pet at a friend's house, and came across My Home Watch through a Google search. At that point though, the penny hadn't dropped that this could be a business opportunity.

Then he saw an ad for the brand on the franchisebusiness.com.au website.

"I'd gone there looking for opportunities, and when I saw it I was starting to get familiar with the brand. It is unique. I could see it being of value and it also allowed me to do what I love doing. The domestic side of property management was the kind of business I really wanted to get into and with a franchise, the branding and legal work was already done."

Getting into business wasn't a fast process, he says. It took a lot of consideration and due diligence to assess the risk, over about 10 weeks.

"For the first couple of months I set up servicing customer leads, I was a bit nervous, because with anything in business there's a risk. Now I'm eight months into it, it's worked really well and I'm really happy

with how it's going."

Standard business hours had been Ben's routine in his previous office-based roles. Now he might be working at 6 am and completing a job at 7 pm before doing admin with his partner. But he can be flexible about his hours and has more opportunity to fit in personal events.

"Now it's more flexible, I can work around appointments," says Ben. "I'm not sitting in front of a computer all day long. You're doing it for yourself."

In addition to the welcome break from an office environment the daily workload can be very varied, from feeding a cat or dog to a 90-minute preparation for a property inspection.

"It's not boring. I'm on my feet and I get to see some amazing properties."

Ben has a non-exclusive territory that spans the salubrious harbourside eastern suburbs in Sydney, from Darling Point to Bondi Beach. Online marketing is a strong source of leads but other business owners,

charity events and animal shelters can all deliver new clients. Customers also approach Ben directly.

His three-year plan is to expand the team and take on extra clients' work through local businesses.

"It's lived up to expectations. A lot of my friends and family were expecting me to jump into thousands of clients but we knew how much reputation you really need to get into the local area and brand yourself there. It's all going well.

"I think the great thing is, although it sounds contradictory, it's niche because we offer a wide range of services. We can pop in on a client on the same contract and do a range of different things while we're there.

"What stands out is it is a challenge, and that's why I wanted to have my own business. It's very different to most careers. You can choose how to do it, and it's very rewarding." ■

