



I said YES!

Deputy General Manager of the GCCEC, Raelene Barry, shares with us why she isn't afraid to say yes!

As a young teenager, when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I never hesitated. Not even for a moment. I was going to be the first female reporter on 60 Minutes. For a minute, I thought it might even be possible until the brilliant journalist, Jana Wendt, beat me to it.

Damn.

Mildly devastated but undaunted, I set off on an overseas adventure, exploring South East Asia, India and Nepal. I trekked the Himalayas, explored the Taj Mahal and got lost in Kathmandu. The people I met, the experiences I had and the lessons I learned stay with me until this day.

I returned home; elated, inspired and quite frankly – broke! My parents had moved from Brisbane to the Gold Coast after I had finished high school and despite firmly stating that I would never move 'down there', I surrendered, never expecting to stay. Well, that was 33 years ago and here I am.

With my backpack barely unpacked, the first of many amazing career opportunities landed in my lap. I was offered a temp role at the Gold Coast's new casino, which hadn't even opened yet. I replied with a single word, which would ultimately become my career mantra.

YES!

My job was to do anything that needed to be done and I felt very confident there wasn't anything I couldn't do. The privilege to work and grow in one of the Gold Coast's most iconic properties was a gift. As an eager young woman wanting to find her place in the world, I had landed in an industry that offered – and continues to offer – so much.

Jupiter's Casino – now The Star Casino – was a mini city. With over 2,500 employees it was a microcosm of society with so many opportunities just waiting for me to say yes! I took to responsibility like a duck to water and revelled in whatever came my way. I was promoted every five or six years to new roles with new challenges and new things to learn.

One of the toughest, yet most satisfying challenges came when the casino offered me the opportunity to study for an MBA. I was intimidated yet gratified and let me tell you, it wasn't easy. Working full-time and studying full-time is not for the faint-hearted and the lessons I learned along the way run deep. There were some obstacles along that road and there was a time where the demands were just too great and it brought me to my knees. But it made me stronger and my graduation ceremony was a poignant moment in my life.

In the process, an opportunity that in time would reveal itself to be one of my most satisfying professional and personal experiences, presented itself: a senior HR role. I had one word.

YES!

It wasn't easy and that time really taught me to get 'comfortable' with tough conversations. I learnt to deal with the most difficult people issues with integrity, kindness and respect. That time also helped me realise that my passion for people and making a difference was very real and very valuable and as the years unfolded it became obvious that it was integral to my purpose.

During this time, I watched with wonder as the next

Gold Coast icon was starting to take shape right next door to the casino: the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre. General Manager of the GCCEC, Adrienne Readings, who was a part of the design and continues to lead the centre to this day, personally sought me out and offered me an opportunity.

What else could I do but say YES!

Those early days were tough. It was a huge test of my professional skills, experience and personal resilience. I sometimes longed for my old role, however, you don't grow if you don't lean in and push through. And I'm so very glad I did.

Fast forward fifteen incredible years and here I am, Deputy General Manager of this Gold Coast icon. The GCCEC is so much more than a 'job'. The passion and care I have for the business and most especially, the people, is so strong. I firmly believe that we have to make the best of every day and in this wild, crazy, never-dull industry that is now part of my DNA, taking care of our people is without doubt my overarching purpose.

We love the Gold Coast and we are so very proud that our passion and commitment has delivered \$300 million in the last 12 months to the local economy. And believe me, the passion isn't waning. One of my biggest New

Years wishes is that we get to expand our building so that we can welcome new

business and welcome back the clients that have outgrown our space. Growth means life in every way!

So as I kick off 2019, I am grateful for the journey I have taken and the stories, experiences, lessons and people that have brought me to where I am today. And for every opportunity I have been able to

say YES to!

I am thinking one of my future opportunities may be a book...and you'd better believe I will say YES to that too!

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