

# BGP Stories from the front-line

Caroline Southgate on Business and Personal Growth

**"I acquired the nickname "the Process Queen" - but it was the focus on process that got us through Covid-19, with no adverse impact on our staff or our clients!" Caroline Southgate, co-founder and MD, Doris Jones Ltd.**



On 16th September the current cohort of the Business Growth Programme was inspired by the story told by our first autumn guest speaker, BGP alumna Caroline Southgate. Caroline is the MD of Essex-based home-care company Doris Jones, a business she co-founded in 2011. She took part in BGP in 2019, at a time when she

was struggling to take the company to the next level. She herself was inspired to investigate BGP by reading Jamie Waller's *Unsexy Business*, where she discovered that the course of his life had been changed when Jamie enrolled on the programme at Cranfield in 2010.

Caroline is a qualified physiotherapist. She was motivated to set up Doris Jones by the belief that in-home care for the elderly could be delivered more effectively in her local area of Westcliff-on-Sea. At the time she joined BGP Caroline employed around 80 staff and despite being Managing Director her days were entirely consumed by working in the business, not on it. "Frankly, I was knackered," she says, and had neither the time nor the energy to plan for the company's future, or her own development. However, she describes herself as a natural reflector and had decided that something had to change.

BGP was that catalyst. Within weeks she had identified and recruited a fellow physio who could take over the firm's day-to-day operations, sitting between herself and the business. The programme changed so many aspects of her attitudes towards running the company – not least the importance of understanding data

and processes – and just as importantly enabled Caroline to address what she wanted for herself. She describes a moment of revelation that occurred when she was outlining her plan for growth to the panel on Presentation Day. Is the business enough for you, she was asked. Suddenly it became clear to Caroline that two things were possible: she could both continue as majority owner of Doris Jones, and achieve other things that mattered to her.

First though she had to deal with the "black swan" event that was Covid-19. The pandemic struck almost immediately after she finished BGP. Fortunately the business was well-prepared, having already stockpiled a plentiful supply of PPE [personal protection equipment]. The BGP focus on streamlining internal processes meant that Doris Jones could not only meet but actually exceeded the requirements for delivering in-home care to its clients. For Caroline it was a frustrating time because her plans for expansion had to be put on hold, but the company emerged from the crisis in good shape and has grown steadily ever since. Now that the business makes fewer demands on her time she has taken advantage of new opportunities to develop herself as a business leader. She describes how she was paired with a Lt General in a mentorship scheme run by the British Army, and worked on "Project Doris Jones" and "Project Caroline". As part of the first project she learned how to develop the process and protocols needed to cope with the death of a staff member or client, something the Army deals with daily but which was completely new to Caroline.

Project Caroline, she says, is also coming along. As well as serving on the board of her industry's trade

association to promote best practice, she has acted as a trustee for Jumbalance, a charity providing holiday travel for the disabled, and been appointed a Fellow of NICE, the health body that reviews and approves new medicines and medical devices. Most recently she has been involved in technology innovation, helping to create an app that assists the training and professional development of care workers in the UK and, eventually, overseas.

She summed up by saying that she had no idea when she enrolled on the Business Growth Programme how enduring the links with Cranfield would be, not just with BGP. The charity linked to Cranfield, the Cranfield

Trust, has proved immensely helpful for her own work in the charitable sector, and the wider network has been invaluable. She even cited how the ideas in Performance at the Limit: Lessons from Formula 1 Motor Racing, co-authored by Cranfield Professor Mark Jenkins, have influenced team-working and supplier collaboration within Doris Jones. For Caroline, it seems the personal development journey is going very much in the right direction.

**You can find out more about Doris Jones Ltd at [www.dorisjones.co.uk](http://www.dorisjones.co.uk)**

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### Doris Jones

At Doris Jones, we understand the importance of balancing the care and support you depend upon, with gentle guidance on how to be as physically independent as you can be.

By combining traditional care services with expertise in physiotherapy and rehabilitation, we can help you gain greater control over your life and stay safely in the place you are happiest.

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