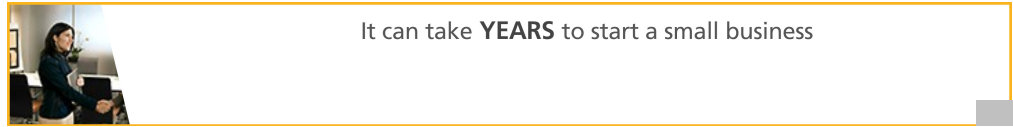


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Incorporating a healthy mind, body

ENTERPRISE: Unveiling a new name, the company has expanded in the region and has maintained some of its original clients

By **CHRISTOPHER CLARK, SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY**

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Garth and Meaghan Jansen, operators of the Employee Wellness Solutions Network, have seen their company grow substantially since it began four years ago. Employing four wellness consultants in those early days, that number is now at 18. (MORRIS LAMONT, The London Free Press)

When last we checked in on Garth and Meaghan Jansen's company, it was in the nascent stages of development - landing its first clients, establishing its day-to-day structure and starting to build a reputation. That was four years ago, and a lot has since changed.

For starters, the company has a new name - Employee Wellness Solutions Network. It doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, but the old name - Employer's Edge - caused too much confusion.

"People thought we were a temp agency," says Garth, laughing. "The new name tells everyone exactly what we do and also how we're organized."

In the last four years, the business has grown substantially as well. In the early days the Jansens employed four wellness consultants; that number now stands at 18. In the early days, the business operated largely in and around London; now it has licensees operating what essentially are franchises in Kitchener-Waterloo, Grey Bruce and Chatham-Kent. (It's not a requirement that licensees operate exclusively in two-name towns.) "It's an exciting time for us right now," says Garth, 36. "We have just unveiled our new name and we're ready to add more franchisees."

The business started after Meaghan wrote her master's thesis on how corporate health can affect employees in the workforce, looking at connections between physical health, mental health and workplace productivity. Both Jansens had been trainers at GoodLife. They decided to create a business that gave employers the opportunity to introduce wellness programs to their employees, both as a way of boosting productivity and as a perk for those working there. Wellness can be defined in many ways but comes back to the basic adage that a healthy mind and body go together.

One of their first clients was Harrison Pensa, "and they're still with us," Garth reports.

The model is straightforward. EWSN consultants offer as many or as few services as a business wants. It could be a nutrition and exercise program for executives. It could be a similar program for the whole workforce. And it could be an education program that includes lunch-and-learn seminars that encourage employees to take part in whatever program is being offered.

"We work with large companies but also smaller ones," Garth says. "Last month we started working with a business that has eight employees. We scaled our service to fit exactly what they need."

Although their own backgrounds are as personal trainers, the Jansens eschew the narrow definition of that service. They offer a much wider variety of services, all under the wellness heading.

Since launching, the couple's life has become a little more hectic. They married in 2005 and now have two children - a 3-year-old boy and a 6-month-old girl.

"Now when we talk about managing stress, people believe we're practising what we're preaching," Garth says.

They work from home, travelling to their clients' places of business to work directly with employees. They traded in a gas-guzzling Hummer and now have two Ford Escapes, bedazzled with their new logo and colours.

In the last few years, they signed up licensees at a leisurely pace, taking on qualified consultants but not aggressively trying to expand. In conjunction with the new name and identity, they have officially converted to a franchise system, which will allow them to expand more rapidly in the months and years to come.

"It's largely what we've been doing, although we haven't officially been franchising," Garth says. "We're really looking forward to the coming year, now that we have a name and identity that tells people exactly what we're all about."

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