

GRACELYN SMALLWOOD

Sydney, NSW | 0413 867 003 | gracelynsmallwood@gmail.com | [LinkedIn Profile URL](#)

GROUP FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

Financial Governance & Operations

“Respected senior financial change agent specialising in large-scale complex business and financial initiatives through opportunity identification, stakeholder engagement, operational oversight, and strategic planning.”

Senior-level financial and operations management expert... who seeks excellence in all areas of a venture, from implementing systems and processes that create efficiencies to reporting and control assessments to monitor performance and risk. Client-focused leader with proven track record for creating streamlined strategies that deliver results and drive continued growth.

Strategic and results-orientated CPA... with significant experience in financial and regulatory reporting, mergers and reforms, framework creation, and forecasting model development. Sought-after senior leader with reputation for effectively managing major financial projects, redeveloping fragmented systems, and leading company-wide business development initiatives.

Global career spans 25+ years... in complex corporate settings with keen ability to see overarching system requirements while creating individual processes that drive organisations towards strategic goals. Known as a trusted advisor and conduit between Boards, executives, teams and clients to gather and dissect key information to push initiatives in right direction.

VALUED EXPERT IN

Finance, Business & Regulatory Reporting – Stakeholder Communications – Accounting – Financial Project Management
SOX – Client Relations – Financial Function Establishment – Performance Monitoring – Risk Assessment & Management
System Improvement – Framework Creation & Implementation – Government & Corporate Sectors – Team Leadership
Client Reporting & Presentation – Business Development – Taxation Management – Model Creation – Strategic Planning

FINANCIAL & OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

REDBALLOON PTY LTD & BIG RED GROUP PTY LTD

Enabled ‘clarity and trust in numbers’ as a key driver behind developing and testing data warehouse and new BI reports.

Redesigned weekly cash flow model to include rolling 3-6 monthly reforecasting estimates.

Led the shift away from a ‘silo mindset’ to create a ‘whole team’ culture.

Accelerated sales for B2B business division of RB by 78%, reduced annual marketing spend via external agencies by 20% and saved up to \$400K per annum in unnecessary quarterly software payments.

BOOKS AND GIFTS DIRECT PTY LTD

Managed financial and operational readiness for the sale of ANZ companies to Murdoch Books in 2015 and conducted due diligence to support transition to new owners.

Saved \$1M per year for the Group and saved buying team 280+ hours per year (\$7K).

BOOST CONNECTIONS INC.

Expertly managed financial operations for 12 client corporations, built new finance and accounting function for HQ and implemented operational systems after discovery of fraudulent activity.

Uncovered and corrected \$500K owed to payment provider on behalf of client.

Increased customer satisfaction by 45%.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

REDBALLOON PTY LTD & BIG RED GROUP PTY LTD | Sydney, NSW | 2010–CURRENT

A trusted leader in the online retail space since 2001, after pioneering experiential gifting in Australia. RedBalloon connects customers with almost 5K unique and amazing experiences, sourced from 1500+ business partners across Australia and NZ.

GROUP FINANCE MANAGER

Reported to: CFO | Indirect Reports: 4 | Accountability: \$100M

Handpicked by former CFO, to accelerate business growth for the billion-dollar online gift retailer, by delivering strong fiscal strategies, driving operational improvements and expertly managing the interdependent finance and operations functions.

Challenged to rapidly gain traction in just 7 days—with no formal handover, newly appointed CFO and siloed staff structure. Stabilised operations during organisational reform in 2017, resulting in high staff turnover/new-look executive structure and the acquisition of Adrenaline in 2018, while future-proofing the firm via a renewed focus on the changing needs of customers.

Selected Highlights:

Transformed strategic decision-making and commercial outcomes, by educating senior leaders on revenue drivers, restructuring business units and designing tools to plan, track and improve cash flow and revenue growth.

- **Enabled ‘transparency and confidence in numbers’ as a key driver behind developing and testing data warehouse and new BI reports**, by reworking the design of internal reporting system and providing clear guidance to the BI build team. *New accurate data source replaced various reports used earlier that provided inconsistent results.*
- **Redesigned weekly cash flow model to include rolling 3-6 monthly reforecasting estimates.** Regular forecasting enabled early detection of ‘likely’ slow cash inflows and improved planning for cash outputs through lean trading periods.
- **Reduced month-end close from 12 days to just 5**, by designing an advanced excel formula (vlookup, basic macro, Sumif, pivot tables) to categorise massive data dumps into useable sensible summaries. *E.g. Decreased credit journals from 8-hour manual categorisation and manipulation to 30 minutes routine activity.*
- **Developed financial revenue model with multiple drivers for RedBalloon**, based on traffic to website, number of sessions, device type, conversion % by device, channel, product type, average order value and cash percentage of order.
- **Enhanced overall performance and strategic decision-making through introducing individual accountability for GMs.** Restructured existing business units into cost centres and branches with allocated strategies, budgets and KPIs.
- **Educated senior leaders about buyer behaviours**, by mapping out customer journeys and related general ledger affects to financial statements dating back 16 years. *This data had never been studied before and fortified future growth plans.*

Restructured and stabilised operations across all business units, that increased sales 78%, reduced marketing expenses by 20% and improved productivity—while also inspiring a support-centric culture.

- **Led the shift away from a ‘silo mindset’ to create a ‘whole team’ culture.** Partnered with GMs to foster a cohesive support-centric finance team, via regular, transparent communication, individual reviews and team building events.
- **More than halved the time taken to formulate Board reports from 12 days to 5 days**, by redefining the finance team’s daily tasks to meet end-of-the-month deadlines. *Won undisputed buy-in and supported staff via daily ‘finance huddle.’*
- **Accelerated sales for B2B business division of RB by 78%**, by replacing deficient CRM with an excel database to record/monitor leads and missed opportunities. *Later integrated Salesforce CRM and Commerce Cloud abilities. Initiative was commended by CEO through an “Oscar Award – MVP” in 2018.*
- **Reduced annual marketing spend through external agencies by 20% (\$450K)**, by assessing and trialling cutting-edge AI technology manageable inhouse. *Onboarded product, became ANZ distributors and increased revenue via new business.*
- **Saved almost 100 hours per year for each of the 15 managers**, by implementing a new HR and payroll system. Digital system adopted timesheets and simplified tracking and documentation of compliance with Awards, and payroll.
- **Increased efficiencies company-wide while also cutting wastage/costs**, by evaluating the 35 existing systems and eliminating redundant software. *Initiative saved RedBalloon up to \$250K per annum in unnecessary quarterly payments.*

BOOKS AND GIFTS DIRECT PTY LTD | Sydney, NSW | 2005–2010

A global illustrated book publishing group founded in 1976. Headquartered in the US and listed on the London Stock Exchange, Quarto sells books across 50 countries and in 39 languages through a variety of traditional and non-traditional channels.

GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR

Reported to: Global CFO (UK) & MD (Australia) | Direct/Indirect Reports: 2/2 | Accountability: \$60M

Headhunted by local MD to direct the ANZ finance function and performance for the US-based publishing group, listed on UK stock exchange and operating under a franchise model. Managed financial and operational readiness for the sale of ANZ companies to Murdoch Books in 2015 and conducted due diligence to support transition.

Served as a trusted partner to the MD and GM, continually assessing and advising on the impact and viability of short- and long-term plans and developing new strategies/initiatives to meet cash flow and operational needs. Played a vital role in recruiting, training and developing staff while also planning for continuous improvement of the group and providing individuals with opportunities for growth. Also, directed payroll and accounts functions and built stakeholder relationships.

Selected Highlights:

Directed complex audit and readiness efforts to expedite sale of AUS business, alleviated potential fallout from Master Franchise Owners and facilitated smooth transition to new owner.

- **Increased staff output while also building morale during a time of organisational change**, by overseeing hiring and contracts, introducing KPIs for group employees, and providing shoulder-to-shoulder leadership and coaching.
- **Improved knowledge and franchise performance for State Managers (Master Franchise Owners)**, by fostering trusted partnerships between Head Office and State Managers and introducing collaborative business partnering. *Provided fiscal and operational leadership and implemented financial management tool (key metrics, sales, debt recovery, etc.)*
- **Mitigated possible opposition to sale of AUS business from Master Franchise Owners**, by developing a risk management plan in collaboration with Operations Director.
- **Exposed perpetual errors in accounting** and recreated CY & PY financials in line with GAAP and corporate governance.

Led multiple operational change initiatives in business-critical areas, that improved cash flow, reduced expenditure and increased productivity.

- **Saved \$1M per year for the Group**, by eliminating loss activity through Testing Program for new/potential products at a cost to both Head Office and Franchisees. *Developed economic models that ultimately enabled program to break even.*
- **Stemmed business bleed**, through developing a weekly/monthly tool to enhance cash forecasting and implementing regular supplier payment runs based on cash flow availability.
- **Prevented inventory wastage/loss**, by introducing product audits and documentation to encourage accountability.
- **Saved buying team 280+ hours per year (\$7K)**, through a centralised product management system that included document/share potential product selection. Developed an excel workbook using Advanced tools (vlookup, sumif, pivot tables), to collate data and display in summary format. *New shared system replaced the manual process used previously.*

BOOST CONNECTIONS INC. | California, USA | 2000–2005

A US-based company, helping customers find smart solutions for their business communication and marketing needs.

GROUP CONTROLLER & ACCOUNTING MANAGER (2013–2015)

Reported to: CEO | Direct/Indirect Reports: 3/7 | Accountability: \$200K - \$150M

Transferred to corporate office in California US, to manage financial operations for 12 privately-owned companies in retail and property management and advise high-net-worth individuals on accounting, audit and taxation compliance. Advised clients, CEO and Board on strategies to improve financial/accounting systems, efficiency, processes, tools and control systems.

Built and directed finance function and 3-member team in accounts payable, accounts receivable and payroll. Managed financial and statutory reporting, local, state and federal legislation and payroll while also serving as company secretary. Challenged on commencement by siloed departments, lack of collaboration and transparency among teams and low morale.

Selected Highlights:

Expertly managed financial operations for 12 client corporations, built new finance and accounting function for HQ and implemented operational systems after discovery of fraudulent activity.

- **Uncovered and corrected \$500K owed to payment provider on behalf of client**, where funds had been taken from customers and not passed on to provider. Created process for daily sales and payment reconciliation of multiple branches/sites with real time activity and weekly reconciliations with payment provider.
- **Increased customer satisfaction by 45%** while also cultivating strong B2B relationships with major customer outlets, by creating a 'Daily Run Schedule' and 'Run Sheet' on tablet/iPhone and integrating with scheduling system, that allowed for real time activity notification for Operations Manager. *Also initiated integration with billing system.*
- **Supported Operations Manager in achieving 5-10 new customer referrals each month**, through introducing a Customer Rewards Program for Referrals to representatives.
- **Enhanced cash flow, swiftly exposed transactional errors and tightened cash handling procedures**, by leading the change to daily reconciliation of sales proceeds (and associated HO reporting) at branch level—rather than weekly.
- **Improved customer experiences and loyalty**, through initiating a '24/7—on call' rotation roster for representatives, ensuring the prompt management of emergency requirements for customers outside of normal business hours.

PRIOR BOOST CONNECTIONS INC. ROLES: SENIOR AUDITOR & TAX ACCOUNTANT, SYDNEY, NSW
GROUP FINANCIAL CONTROLLER, SYDNEY, NSW

EARLY FINANCE CAREER APPOINTMENTS

Group Finance Director, Airganix Pty Ltd, Sydney, NSW
(formerly EcoQuest International Pty Ltd, a division of EcoQuest)

Finance Director, Clarent Corporation Pty Ltd, Sydney, NSW

Financial Controller, ANZ division of Clarent Corporation, Sydney, NSW
(formerly ACT Networks Pty Ltd, a division of ACT Networks)

Financial Controller, Cyndan Chemicals Pty Ltd & Cyndan Manufacturing Pty Ltd, Sydney, NSW

Finance Accountant, DayTimers Pty Ltd, a Division of ACCO, Sydney, NSW

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Diploma in Organisational Leadership, Huntington University, USA, 2017

Executive Coaching, Huntington University, USA, 2016

Life Coaching, Townsend Institute, USA, 2015

Process Group Experiential Training, Del Valle Relational Institute, USA, 2014

Bachelor of Laws, Charles Sturt University, Australia, 2001

Bachelor of Business, University of Technology, Australia, 2000

INDUSTRY MEMBERSHIPS & PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS

Chartered Accountants Australia New Zealand | American Psychological Association
International Coaching Federation

Microsoft - Word, Excel (Advanced), PowerPoint, Access

SAP, Sage Pronto, Advanced Revelation, Xero, MYOB, Quick Books, Handisoft

Tableau, ADP, Employment Hero, Hand iSOFT, Yardi, Rent Manager