

Being boss a buzz

Despite the hard work, running your own business has its perks, writes **Anna Edwards**

Test drive

IT IS not the freedom, autonomy, location or working with his best mate that Greg Ellis loves the most about his job.

He loves it because it is a hard slog, keeps him on his toes and allows him to help others out of tight situations – situations he has found himself in once or twice.

Ellis, 32, is co-founder of the online, short-term, payday loan company Cash Doctors which is based at Southport on the Gold Coast.

He started Cash Doctors at the end of 2005 with his mate and business partner Sean (pronounced Shane) Teahan, 33.

"I guess having your own company is like the hardest thing you can do, so it is also the most satisfying," Ellis says.

"Especially when it becomes airborne and you know you have created something from nothing. That's the satisfying thing."

Cash Doctors caters to the 30-something client who works hard, makes enough cash to get by but who might find themselves short of cash before payday.

"When Sean and I were at uni or in our 20s and working and especially when we were starting Cash Doctors, we had a few times between paydays when we needed cash," he says.

"So I guess we aim at people essentially similar to ourselves."

He says one of the big buzzes he gets on a daily basis is helping out people who are in situations in which he has found himself.

"We have been taking on thousands of people – so I guess it's great that



CASH doctor ... Greg Ellis loves being his own boss.

Picture: Kevin Bull

we have been able to help all of them," he says.

When they met, Ellis – who has a degree in international business and commerce with double majors in economics – and Teahan were working on financial contracts for telecommunications companies in Ireland.

After having gained various experiences, the pair decided to go it alone and, in 2001, launched an online health recruitment business.

"We had both worked in jobs previously but, in terms of what abilities you have, a job doesn't always harness everything you can do in a business sense," Ellis says.

"If you're working for your own business or company you have to bring everything into the fold."

When he returned to Australia, it

was time to start another business and along came Cash Doctors.

Although the work is hard, Ellis says having his own company has allowed him to be more flexible with his time.

Being based on the Gold Coast means he gets to enjoy the outdoor lifestyle he loves. He can get to work when he wants, work from home if he wants and still manage to fit in the free-time activities.

"I guess my perfect day would be to get up in the morning and go for a surf for a couple of hours, work from about 10 o'clock to 4 o'clock, then go for a game of golf or tennis in the afternoon then either have the night off or work for a few more hours," he says.

Because the company is relatively new, Ellis says he spends a lot of hours at work but it is all relative to what is

happening in the business at the time. "Sometimes I can work only 20-30 hours a week but then, other times, we work 60-70. It does really depend on what's happening," he says.

Which is why he loves being his own boss: "Part of the appeal is that you're not answerable to anyone and what you do is ultimately up to you, which is a good thing," he says.

Being in partnership with a mate is also a bonus.

"It is nice to have someone else to bounce things off and he has strengths that I don't necessarily have and we also have complementary skills."

"There is also that element of not taking things too seriously and that there is someone else there to tell you to soften up or loosen up a bit if you're too into yourself," Ellis says.

Facts

- **Name:** Greg Ellis.
- **Age:** 32.
- **Lives:** Main Beach on the Gold Coast.
- **Position:** Co-founder of internet payday loan company Cash Doctors.
- **Loves:** The challenges associated with starting and running a business and the kick he gets out of helping people out of unavoidable situations.
- **Challenges:** Pioneering a business that is different from all others in the industry and educating potential clients.
- **On being his own boss:** Likes the flexibility and being able to enjoy the things he loves in life and also the opportunity to use all his skills and abilities in the overall running of the whole company.

Peter Cullen



Balancing act

HOW valuable is empathy?

I always feel good when someone takes a genuine interest in what I am doing and how I am feeling – especially when they appear to understand my motives and circumstances at the time and are willing to listen to what I have to say without making any judgment or criticism.

I am appreciative and grateful for their interest and concern.

Empathy can be a natural or learnt skill and is very beneficial in certain areas of employment.

The more common areas are health, teaching and management.

Each one needs to gain an understanding of a situation by listening carefully and understanding the circumstances of each individual they are assisting.

Correct decisions and outcomes require the input of their patients, students or employees.

One of the strongest skills of an effective leader is knowing how to be empathetic. It boosts morale, loyalty, honesty and a feeling of safety or security in the workplace.

It also helps to promote an open and comfortable feeling within each person as they feel respected and worthy of their leader's positive attention.

On a larger scale, each one of us can easily practise empathy with a colleague, friend or family member simply by taking the time to ask how they are and then listen with genuine interest to what they have to say without interruption, judgment or criticism and offer advice only if it is requested.

It also can help to reduce any tension or stress an individual may be experiencing.

Being empathetic comes easily to some, while others have to try hard and make a serious effort.

Either way, give it a go and see how it can positively affect you and those you are with.

Peter Cullen is director of corporate stress management consultancy, meditationplus.com.au

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