



Feel the magic

According to [James Thomas](#), attending The Growth Project's leadership course was one of the best things he could have done to take his nonprofit to the next level.

When I established Feel the Magic – a nonprofit that offers grief education and support to children who have experienced a significant loss – in 2013 I had next to no experience in fundraising but had run my own business for many years. I have treated Feel the Magic as a business since day dot by building key relationships, keeping financials in order and ensuring customers are happy.

Researching and learning on the go, in just under four short years Feel the Magic's fundraising revenue has reached a turnover of \$340,000, which is more than a 200% increase from last financial year. As it stands, we are now on track to achieve \$500,000 by the end of the 2016/2017 financial year.

From the beginning, like most start-up charities, events have been our main source of revenue. Each year we hold a spinathon, golf day, Night of Magic gala dinner and have a team take part in Sydney's City2Surf.

Over the past 12 months, however, our focus has shifted to other revenue streams. We were successful with a few grants from company foundations and PAFs. Our once-off and regular donations from members of the public and volunteers have increased, contributing to 25% to 30% of our overall revenue. We have also been blessed with the support of a philanthropist who has contributed \$100,000 to various projects over a two-year period.

Designed just for nonprofits

In 2015, I took part in a leadership program called The Growth Project, which was designed to assist in the development of those who led a nonprofit organisation. The program could not have come at a better time to help me take Feel the Magic to the next level and allow me to step away from my job to focus solely on my purpose.

From the beginning, the program had impact. Meeting other charity leaders immediately created a like-minded support network and gave me an insight into what's important when selecting a charity to support. I learned to:

Give back Even as a charity, to maintain long-term relationships you need to be able to give something back to keep donors engaged. It must be a win-win relationship and include a shared valued experience.

Accept advice Taking on board expert advice from special guest speakers throughout the program gave me a deeper understanding of what it takes to lead a sustainable nonprofit. This starts with a clear vision and strategy.

Have a clear purpose It's important to be crystal clear about what your purpose is, what impact you want to see in society and how you are going to implement your strategy. Understand what your point of difference is out in the sector and don't stray from your purpose by catering to tasks that don't fit within your realm.

Diversify revenue Identifying and targeting different types of revenue streams was an important lesson in becoming sustainable. As most of our revenue came from fundraising events, I knew I had to change this as soon as possible.

Implement good governance Good governance and selecting the right skill sets for board support and development is essential. From the program, it was obvious that choosing the right chairperson was key. Once I had this piece of the puzzle in place, I had the support to develop a solid board. The skills we targeted in potential board roles were financial, legal, human resources and marketing. As a leader, I felt confident we had our governance covered from a holistic standpoint, which has allowed me to pour my energy into the tasks I'm passionate about and great at.

Delegate For Feel the Magic to survive, grow and become sustainable, I realised I could no longer keep doing it on my own and had to learn the skill of delegation.

Be a good leader Your expertise as a leader can be seen in your ability to sell your ideas and have others believe in the cause just as much as you do.

The Growth Project gave me the space to allow myself some thinking time, and I realised Feel the Magic was a community that brings people together who are experiencing the same trauma. What it stood for was to change the way we, as a society, view and treat grief.