

my career

THE NO.1 MARKET FOR JOBS

Dream job, tips included

How to be
Simon Kelly, general manager
of footytips.com.au

IT'S not often you get paid to talk footy all day, but when you run the largest footy tipping service in Australia, it's no surprise that your clients want to talk about the game.

Running footytips.com.au has been an unexpected twist in my relatively short career. I'd always worked in people-friendly jobs and knew that I was interested in marketing. I stumbled upon a job that could combine my passion for footy and marketing. It was a perfect fit.

I found the job advertised online and began an unorthodox application process: instead of sending a resume and a cover letter I was asked to dial a number and answer a number of questions on a voice mail message. This was the perfect opportunity to show my passion for marketing and football, as well as my people skills.

I spoke about why I was perfect for the job, explained my understanding of the relationship between sales and marketing for an organisation and emphasised the confidence in my ability to generate sales and fulfil a marketing role for the business. I received a call within half an hour asking me to come in for an interview.

Being paid to talk about footy was a change from my university job at Lone Star Restaurant. After five years of line dancing there's absolutely nothing that

embarrasses me any more. Perhaps the most satisfying job I had was in demolition — I got paid to smash things up.

When I left uni with my commerce degree I found myself selling lawnmowers. I wasn't sure what type of marketing I wanted to get into, but I always felt that I needed some hard-core sales skills.

There is definitely a stigma attached to sales when you do a marketing or commerce degree, but I knew that some time selling would pay off. My role now requires me to seek new clients, but also find new business opportunities. None of this happens without making a phone call and pitching new ideas to people and — most importantly — closing the deal.

When I started at ExtraCorp (which runs footytips.com.au) in September 2004, I was hired as an account manager. I figured it was based on the 1600 hours I'd spent by then watching footy. However, I found the organisation was really professionally run, focused on creating great online user experiences. I worked out pretty quickly that I'd found a job I wanted to excel at.

I progressed from account manager to general manager primarily through my ability to build relationships with clients and giving excellent customer service. The flow-on from this is that customer retention is high



Customer relationships is where some other online marketers come off the rails — they find it hard to build that relationship without face-to-face communication. I definitely encourage everyone at footytips.com.au to focus on having good relationships with clients.

What I particularly like about the role is working for a young and dynamic company. The founders of the business, Heath Kilgour and Nathan Isterling, were only in their mid-20s when they decided, over a beer, to start a company. It reflects the fast-paced business environment that we now all work in. They've been successful making good decisions fast. The culture isn't that of many larger companies, where decisions can take time. As a result, I've been empowered to make my own decisions and back my own judgement.

My work is made better by

Simon Kelly is on the ball when it comes to the success of footytips.com.au.
PICTURE: REBECCA HALLAS

having such a fun product. Footy tipping is easy to communicate and it's about making the office culture that little bit more lively.

As a way to help drive marketing and promotions, it's a great vehicle and really suited to our client companies, as well as newspapers and radio stations. It also helps that it's not a hard sell, I never feel as though I'm pressuring people into something that they don't want.

Working with technology has been a great learning experience. I was never behind the times with technology, but certainly not at the cutting edge.

I've been constantly amazed at what a talented software engineer is able to produce and I've had to learn how to take concepts from clients and present them to the production team in a simple, concise way.

I've had to unlearn everything I know about marketing, but

CV

Born Melbourne, 1982.
Educated John Paul College, Frankston 1995-2000
Monash University, Clayton BCom (marketing).
Jobs Labourer, Chelsea Demolition 1995-2002; waiter and barman at Lonestar Steakhouse 1996-2000; industry analyst at South Pacific Publishing 2001-2004; salesman at Melbourne's Mower Centre 2004; general manager at ExtraCorp 2004-present.
Unwinding Footy, gigs, Meredith Music Festival, restaurants.
In five years I'll be enjoying watching Melbourne win their fifth straight premiership, working on new fantasy, blog and dream-team products and building online communities.

back the fluff and turn the client speak into tech speak. Thankfully sport will continue to be a major passion of mine so working on new online projects and developing online communities with different sports will be my focus over the coming years.

Developing dreamteam.com.au as well as sporting blogs will be my major focus immediately and after that the possibilities with online sports products are almost endless. This keeps me excited in my job and looking to Asia, the US and Britain for inspiration and ideas.

I watch footy all weekend and then talk it all week with my clients. I get the satisfaction of knowing that around the country, nearly a million people enjoy their footy a little bit more every year because they are in one of our competitions and I've had a small part to play.