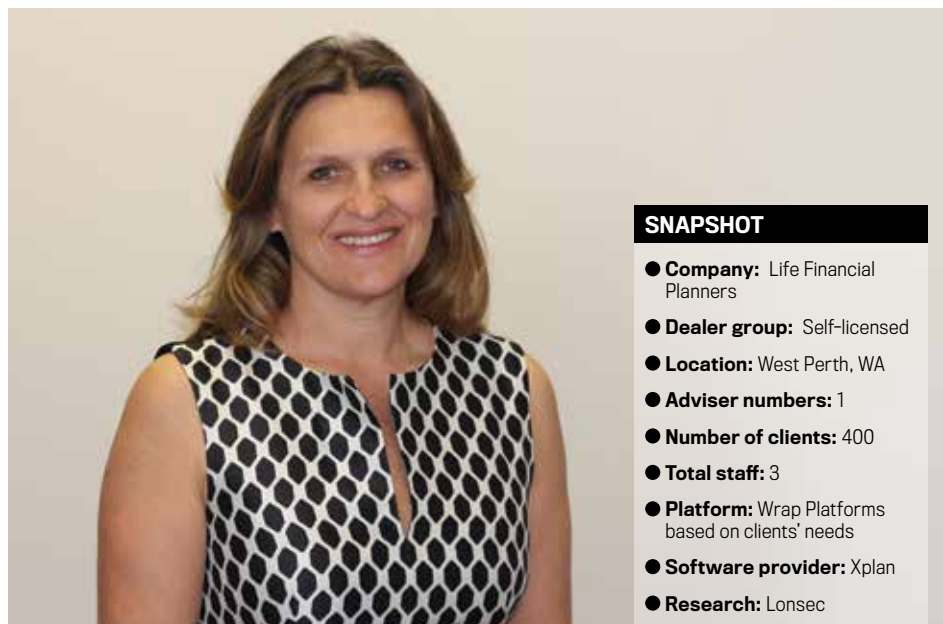


● PRACTICE PROFILE

The right balance

Life Financial Planners director Marijana Ravlich explains how the search for a better work-life balance led her to start her own advice business

STORY/ Scott Hodder



SNAPSHOT

- **Company:** Life Financial Planners
- **Dealer group:** Self-licensed
- **Location:** West Perth, WA
- **Adviser numbers:** 1
- **Number of clients:** 400
- **Total staff:** 3
- **Platform:** Wrap Platforms based on clients' needs
- **Software provider:** Xplan
- **Research:** Lonsec

FOR MARIJANA RAVLICH, entering the financial advice profession was about mainly trying to find the lifestyle benefits she couldn't maintain as a stockbroker.

Based in Western Australia she realised that she wasn't suited to the trading life and turned to the more personable world of financial advice. Little did Ms Ravlich realise then, but one day she would be publicly recognised for her client service provision.

"I realised that the nature of stockbroking – because it is very transactional – was really, probably not the best sort of long-term career option," Ms Ravlich said recalling her time before financial advice.

"I had two small children [and] getting to work on time when the stock markets opened, here in WA is very, very tricky. I [learnt] a bit more about what financial

planning was and what it entailed and I realised that from the personal point of view it was a lot more beneficial," she said.

However, in making the change Ms Ravlich found despite having the academic knowledge for the job she lacked any formal training and hands-on experience in giving advice.

A brush with the banks

It was at that point she was guided by a "very established planner back in the day" who told her that the banking system was a great way to learn about how to give advice.

"I [then] went to work at Westpac," Ms Ravlich said.

"I was working in the private bank, business banking for Westpac for a few years and just realised that I wasn't an institutional person. [I] didn't really like the way the bureaucracy

operated in a big institution. I particularly liked financial planning, but where they were pushing it, it just didn't sit right with me," she said.

A short time after working with the bank and trying her luck with another practice, Ms Ravlich realised that she had enough of being told how to do things and decided it was her time to break away and start her own business.

"I like doing things a certain way – my way – and I went out on my own," she said.

After a brief moment as a corporate authorised representative for Securitator, Ms Ravlich went out and got her own licence and has never looked back.

"I like the independence, not being accountable to anybody apart from my clients. No one is telling us what products my clients should be entering into," she said.

Not going unnoticed

Ms Ravlich was finally able to give advice the way she saw best, and her efforts did not go unnoticed, as she was a finalist for the 'Best client servicing' category at the 2014 *ifa Excellence Awards*.

But Ms Ravlich never considered what she was doing to be anything special, rather it was what she always thought clients deserved from their adviser. Though little did she know her staff members thought differently.

"[I was] getting feedback from the girls constantly [about] what we are doing for our clients being a hell of a lot more than what most advisers [were] doing," she said.

"They are the ones that actually implemented the application to put our hats in the ring for the *ifa* award."

Making it through to the final stage boosted Ms Ravlich's confidence in not only how she ran her business, but how she interacted with her clients.

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"I was sort of surprised because actually the girls were probably more confident about our level of [service]; I just assumed that is the way it should be," Ms Ravlich said. "I was just probably not aware that we were offering a service that was superior."

"The feedback from the clients has been really, really positive, and I guess being the typical adviser I [will]

just keep on doing what I have been doing, until people around you make you aware what you have been doing is a lot better than [others]," she said.

Looking forward

Heading into the future Ms Ravlich is determined to continue providing her clients with the best support she can whilst also keeping an eye out for someone to take over the business.

"We have been going for 10 years and succession is an issue for me over the next 10 – that is something we will be looking at," Ms Ravlich said.

"I would like to grow my staff obviously with people that are like-minded like myself and also that are happy to come to work and do the work that they do and actually continue to provide an environment for our clients [in which] they are well looked after."

Although more importantly, Ms Ravlich wants to ensure that she

is able to maintain the work-life balance that she set out in search for when she entered into the advice industry. Not only for herself but so that her clients can see she is a "real person" with "real concerns".

"You can run a business and still have a good family life balance and I think that is really, really important because it comes across to your clients." ●