



...with NICK MARVIN FAIM

By Chloe Vellinga

Born in Madras, India, Nick Marvin FAIM moved to Australia in 1987, before calling Perth home in 2004. A devoted family man, Mr Marvin has been married for 20 years and he and his wife Leigh have six children, four girls and two boys. Originally forming a career in management consulting over a decade, Mr Marvin chose to join the Perth Wildcats executive team in 2006, first as Chief Executive Officer and now serving as the club's Managing Director. Mr Marvin talks to *Leader* about the lessons he has learned over the years at Western Australia's only National Basketball League club.

What is the most important lesson you have learned in your career to date?

The environment is changing at an ever-increasing pace and it is critical for organisations to adapt in order to survive and succeed.

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement in your time at the Perth Wildcats?

To establish its mission and strategic direction. Prior to my commencement, the organisation was focused on the singular pursuit of on-court success – to this end we had won four championships in 24 seasons. Since 2009, when we reset our mission to “inspire and entertain through excellence”, we turned our attention to changing lives using the currency of being sporting role models. Since that defining moment, every employee (players and non-players) was recruited based on a certain set of core values, far more extensive than just sporting prowess. Unsurprisingly, we have won three championships in the ensuing seven years, without losing money.

How has your involvement with the Perth Wildcats helped you to develop as a leader?

I've learned the importance of getting to know each other in the organisation well enough so we can work to maximise our individual strengths and rely on those

around us to backfill our weaknesses.

What motivates you every day?

Born and raised in a third-world country and in very modest circumstances, the opportunities Australia has provided me are beyond anything I could have imagined. I need little motivation to make the most of every day. More recently, the ability to make a positive contribution to society through the unique opportunities that a sporting organisation provides makes every sunrise a gift.

What traits do you believe all leaders need and why?

Leaders need to first care for the human person. To truly appreciate that each person has a certain set of needs that must be considered. Not as groups or segments but as unique individuals – the sanctity of life.

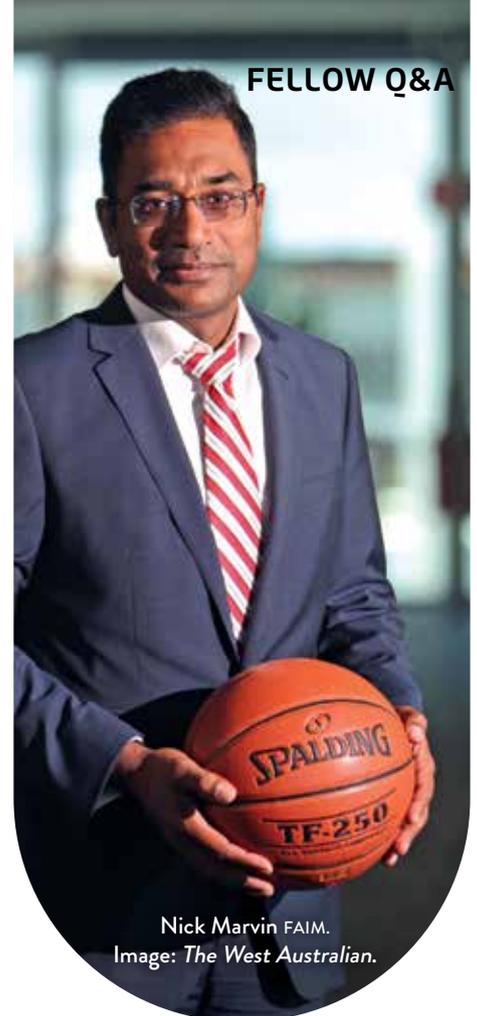
Secondly, to communicate in an authentic way. To find the best way to be understood but more importantly to truly understand. To listen not just to what is said, but what is not being said. Finally, to pay attention to the changing environment. You can't do this from behind a desk. One must get out and experience or learn from others' experiences – customers and non-customers.

What has been the biggest problem you have faced as a leader and how did you overcome this?

My greatest challenge has been the lack of support for women's sport, in particular the Perth Lynx, which we acquired a little over a year ago. It was important to me that we would not sell out and objectify our female athletes, that they would be strong, powerful women. Whilst attendances have been acceptable, what has been unacceptable is the lack of corporate support – less than five per cent in comparison to the Wildcats.

It's not for want of trying. It is a sad indictment on corporations and the stark reality of gender bias. And no, we have not yet overcome this problem, however, given the opportunity I intend to make it my mission to do so.

What do you find to be the most rewarding aspect of business leadership?



Nick Marvin FAIM.
Image: *The West Australian*.

The opportunity to change lives, including my own. To learn and to share learnings from the rookie player, the intern, the upset customer, the special needs child in a school or the prisoner who is genuinely trying to make amends and prepare for a new life after he has paid his debts.

What do you feel makes a strong leader in the sporting industry?

The importance of encouraging young invincible men and women in the prime of their youth and athletic ability to consider the privilege and power they have to transform society, to consider their legacy and their future after the final whistle has been blown.

How do you maintain a good work-life balance?

To achieve a good work-life balance I try to spend quantity time at home and quality time at work.

We need to understand that we are replaceable at work but never at home.

Which leader do you most admire?

For me it would be Mother Teresa.

She started a global social movement with almost no money, purely just passion and a vision.

Do you have a favourite inspirational quote or motto?

If you cannot do great things, do little things with great love.