

IMELIO'S CEO CHARLOTTE PETRIS ON BEING A FINTECH SUPERSTAR, MAKING THE LEAP FROM CORPORATE FINANCE & GENDER DIVERSITY

Fintech companies are giving traditional financial systems a run for their money and reshaping the way we do business, forever. Thanks to this fast evolving niche, it's become easier and cheaper for businesses to grow.

Blazing a trail in Australia is Charlotte Petris.

She's the co-founder and CEO of Timelio, an award-winning start up best described as a peer-to-peer marketplace for invoice financing.

It launched as a tiny husband-and-wife team but will soon expand to 30, not bad for a venture that started only a little over a year ago.

One of Australia's only fintech founders, Charlotte says starting her own business was always on the cards. But Timelio only took off when two things came into acute alignment.

She says, "I had just had my second child and I didn't want to go back to the corporate big bank environment. It's very demanding. I mean I now work 100 hours a week but somehow it's different because it's what you want to do."

The second tipping point involved a shift in industry mood.

"It was the right time for technology, particularly in Australia, to start challenging the incumbents and old ways of doing things."

Charlotte's decision to quit a long and lucrative career in corporate finance and start her own business has certainly paid off.

Timelio is changing the way small businesses can access finance. It works by allowing SMEs to expand by getting paid through an online network of investors who fund their invoices. Funds are unlocked in less than 24 hours.

"There are a lot of people out there from big corporate organisations that want to go out and do their own thing, but very few actually do it," she says. "If you have a real passion to go out and do your own thing, it's worth taking that risk and that first step."

Charlotte's biggest challenge now is Timelio's furious rate of growth. As the start up embarks on a massive recruitment campaign, she's aware of the importance of finding the right hire – every single time.

"You have to get people who are the right fit, even more so than their skill set. If someone's not the right fit, it will cause you a lot of heartache.

"The other challenge is my role changes almost every month as the business changes and the team grows. With it, there's an expectation that you have to understand everything."

Charlotte's incredible journey with Timelio has been a standout success in the male dominated tech and fintech space (she's also Vice President of FinTech Australia and a member of the Federal Government's FinTech Advisory Group).

On gender diversity, she says her experience has surprisingly been "quite positive".

"There is more and more support, particularly through networks like Springboard that focus on women leading highly sustainable tech businesses. Our first tech hire was a female. In fact, half of our tech team is female, so we're very lucky."