

# Belonging Matters' Podcast

## Transcript

Series 2 Episode 12: Cam Can Services - Your Time is My Business

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Welcome to Belonging Matters Podcast, Series Two, Employment. Also available on Apple podcasts, Google podcasts, Spotify, and [www.belongingmatters.org](http://www.belongingmatters.org). You can email Belonging Matters on [info@belongingmatters.org](mailto:info@belongingmatters.org), and please, subscribe and share. Series Two, Episode Twelve, 'Cam Can Services' - Your Time is My Business'. Marc and Anthea Lema are the parents of seven children. The concept of creating CAM CAN, a Disability Services Organisation, was borne out of Marc and Anthea's personal experience in creating innovative supports for their son Cameron who has an intellectual disability. At the age of 32, Cameron is the proprietor of his own business which has been successfully

operating for 14 years. Cam also moved into his own home at the age of 18 where he continues to live with his flat mate, now good friend. Cam lives a meaningful and active life in his local community. In this article Anthea and Marc describe the reason Cam Can was created, how it works and other important features of Cameron's business. It was first published as an article by Belonging Matters in their periodical, issue 33, 'Thinking About...Nineteen Stories of Social Inclusion.'

My name is Osher Marks, and I am honoured to narrate this podcast on behalf of Anthea, Marc, and Cameron.

You can discover more about Cameron's Cam Can Service at [www.cancan.org.au](http://www.cancan.org.au).

## **Cam Can Services - your time is my business**

### **About Cameron, the proprietor**

Cameron is a young man with great zest for life! Cam lives in his own home in the community - he has shared his home with a fabulous guy in a typical flat mate arrangement for the past 8 years. Cam also has a profound intellectual disability, he has an unsteady gait, epilepsy and some visual issues. Cam is not able to speak and receives support to help with daily tasks and personal care. In spite of his challenges, Cam lives a full life, not only operating his own business but also enjoying the opportunity to participate in a variety of recreational and community activities such as swimming at the beach, going to

the gym, learning to box, watching indoor table tennis and basketball. Cam has also developed a love for music as numerous people around him, including his flat mate, play guitar and sing and always include Cam. Over the years that Cam has been living in his home, he has also made a few friends and numerous contacts in the community.

### **Why a small business for Cam?**

Cameron's parents strongly believed in Cameron's capacity and had a vision for him running a proper business as a real alternative to the sheltered workshop which was the only option from the service system at that time. The proposed business was centred around Cameron's needs and interests. One of the Guiding Principles was that "All support/services will be customised and individualised for Cameron with a focus on expanding Cameron's personal community and his social connections."

### **How did Cameron's business "Cam Can Services" get started?**

To develop the original plan for the business a group of 11 people including Cameron, worked on the concept. This group or "Circle of Friends" became known as "Cam's Support Crew". The group consisted of family members and a few friends who knew Cam and who also had experience in areas that would be helpful in setting up a small business. Even before developing the business plan, a set of fundamental Operating Principles were established to ensure that all decisions made could be tested for their integrity. Once the Business Plan was in place, a subgroup of Cam's Support Crew formed consisting

of four members and they became primarily responsible for developing the business, regularly feeding progress back to the larger group and engaging with them for consensus and future direction. Important principles that the group were directed by when designing Cam Can Services:

- The business needs to be flexible to suit Cam.
- It must be built around Cameron's interests and skills and must be meaningful to him.
- It shall provide the opportunity for Cam to further develop skills and meet people.
- It must be a typical small business offering quality services – NO Cap in hand.
- Opportunities for mutual benefit must be sought.
- Finally, the business will provide Cam with a real income and potentially financial independence.

## **What is Cam Can Services?**

Cam Can Services "Your Time is My Business" provides a waiting service to save people taking time away from work to wait for a delivery or service to be provided. While waiting, Cam (and his support worker) offer a range of other services such as washing the car, sweeping the path, raking the grass – for a nominal additional cost.

Who would have thought of a waiting service? Cam's father experienced the "light bulb moment" while waiting at home for a tradesperson while undergoing renovations to his home. He was frustrated at having to take half a day off work (precious annual leave time) to wait for a person. He noticed Cam sitting

patiently on the couch and thought, Cam is very good at waiting. Cam has to wait for someone to get him up, to dress him, to help him with his meals, to take him anywhere. He asked himself, "How can we turn this skill into a business?"

## **What's in a name?**

Why "CAM CAN"? Throughout his life, everyone said that Cam couldn't. He wasn't allowed to participate in many school events or activities, he was excluded from mainstream life. Cam Can is an ingenious and catchy name which lives up to what it stands for – no longer does anyone say, "Cam Can't", because Cam, most definitely CAN!

Cam's business is targeted at busy working people. These days, customers tend to be people who want to support Cameron's business and returning customers who generally live within a 20 minute drive of his home. Cam has a business Coordinator who takes the calls from customers, schedules bookings, prepares invoices, and communicates between the customer and the people who help Cameron to provide the service. Cameron's support workers are the quality control to ensure work is done to a high standard. It is also their responsibility to actively engage Cameron in the work being carried out.

## **Looking Cool**

Cameron and his support workers look the part – they wear shirts and caps branded with the business name and always look smart. The gear they use is maintained in such a way that the kit is always ready to roll for each new job. Cam now has his

own vehicle which the support worker drives. The vehicle is also easy to identify with the Cam Can Services logo affixed to the windows.

A great benefit to Cameron is that he knows each day when he is going to a job as soon as he puts his shirt on. He knows the routine i.e. packing up the vehicle and what to expect when he arrives at a job.

Quality work is a key element that helps to make Cam Can Services as good as it is, is the reliability of good support workers who know Cam well as they're essentially supporting him while assisting him to perform the job at hand. A great deal of time has been invested in giving these people ample time to get to know Cameron well before commencing jobs with him. Additionally, training in how to perform certain tasks such as washing a vehicle to a quality standard is also provided as the support worker is ultimately responsible for the successful completion of work.

It is important to note that Cameron's support workers are not paid from his business earnings. Cameron received support from the Disability Services Commission in WA. This resource pays for his support workers. **Short term pain for long term gain!**

This may not be true for others, but from the experience of Cam's Crew, there is no hiding from the fact that a lot of work is involved in getting a small business enterprise off the ground for a person with additional challenges in their life, particularly in the early stages. Asking people to help is not easy. However,

having a few committed people really assists in sharing the load. It was surprising to find how willing people were to be a part of Cam's Crew. It also meant there were more people to come up with ideas and make decisions. There needed to be a person to drive the project – a strong leader. There also needed to be people willing to do the doing – all played very important roles.

### **Is starting your own business really worth considering?**

For Cameron, there was really no other option as his family would not settle for any alternative that the system offered. Cameron's business is tailored to suit him and has been extremely successful in more ways than one:

- It gives Cameron meaningful things to do every day.
- The business is flexible and works around his health and other factors.
- Cameron has responsibilities – people have high expectations of him.
- The cost in setting the business up was minimal.
- Working with universities and TAFE colleges to obtain his website, logo and assistance with marketing resulted in strong bonds.
- Cameron meets new people every day.
- He builds on the skills he has and continues to develop new skills - there is a variety of work.
- Cameron has matured with his business and now has a valued status as a contributing member of the community.
- Cameron is challenged.

- Cameron has made some friends and many acquaintances.
- Cameron earns an income!

Above all, Cameron in himself is very content and happy. He is no longer the stressed and angry individual he was when he finished school. Cam can be trusted to do things his family always hoped would be possible. In a relatively short period of time, Cameron has become a likeable, cooperative and engaging young man. These qualities alone speak volumes in support of the reasons why it was worth designing Cam Can Services.

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