



## CASE STUDY

### ENTERPRISE + STEM

## Lina Qasem ROBOFUN



**Lina looked at her computer screen with a big smile on her face. She'd just received another request from Darebin City Council to provide a robotics and coding training session to young girls in Victoria.**

In less than five years after arriving from Jordan, Lina managed to accomplish her dream of running her own robotics business.

### How the idea emerged

After completing a Computer Information Systems degree and working as a software engineer in Jordan, Lina and her husband decided to move to Australia.

Arriving in a new country, and not knowing anyone, Lina found it very difficult to find a job.

To keep herself busy and grow her network, she began volunteering and attending Meetup.com events.

Two years later, and with the addition of her first child, Lina decided to create her own job rather than waiting for someone to employ her. Tapping into her 'passion area' of

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robotics and coding, Lina came up with the idea for Robofun.

She would take her experience and expertise and turn it into a business providing robotics and coding workshops in Australia.

She says, "Robofun is my second baby! It was a small idea in my mind, and I kept thinking about it because I am passionate about robotics and coding."

### **Testing the market**

Lina began by asking herself the question, "Is there a market for running robotics and coding workshops in Australia?"

To get answers, she decided to test her idea in the marketplace.

Lina heard from a parent she'd met while volunteering that a local school principal wanted to offer robotics and coding for their students.

She met with the principal and explained her business idea and the principal agreed to trial one of Lina's workshops. It turned out to be a huge success, with many of the students and their parents asking for more!

After a few months, Lina added summer workshops to her business offering. Most of the students who attended had either previously participated in one of Lina's workshops or knew her personally and knew

how good she was with coding and robotics.

Testing her school and summer workshops, and offering some one-on-one tutoring, taught Lina that there was a gap in the market for workshops on robotics and coding.

Filling this gap and satisfying the needs of her customers sent Lina on a path to success.

### **What does Robofun offer?**

Robofun provides young girls in Victoria with the opportunity to learn coding and 3D design and develop their love of robotics.

Due to her experience as a software engineer, Lina custom designs her workshops to suit the level and skills of her students.

To make her workshops engaging, she integrates skills like creativity, logical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and enterprise.

Lina explains, "There's a new technology that does e-sewing, which is a mix of sewing with electrical and electronic components, by using conductive string. We are using it in our workshops to attract more girls because they love fashion and design."

When Lina lived in Jordan, she'd participated in robotics and coding competitions and had won lots of medals. But she couldn't seem to find similar contests available in Australia.

To address this, and to further her mission

**Lina took her experience and expertise and turned it into a business running robotics and coding workshops.**

**Lina wanted to ensure that girls were challenging themselves and having fun while also learning new skills.**



of attracting more girls into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) Lina created a series of robotics competitions.

She wanted to ensure that girls were challenging themselves and having fun while also learning new skills.

### **Award-winning**

When Lina designs her robotics and coding workshops, she's mindful of the social, ethical, and economic situation of her students and their parents.

As such, she sets competitive prices and offers an instalment payment schedule. Additionally, Lina strives to ensure that everyone who attends her programs feels respected and safe.

Her approach to helping families in disadvantaged areas and encouraging girls towards STEAM has been recognised through the prestigious AMP's 'Tomorrow Maker Fund' award. This award acknowledges her as a role model for young girls. She won the 2019 Ygap First Gens Growth Entrepreneur award and received over \$12,000 to grow her business.

She has also been selected as a finalist for two other awards: the 2019 AusMumpreneur Award and The Australian Women's 2019 Women of the Future.

### **Getting some help**

While Lina was waiting for potential employers to contact her about her job applications, she discovered a program called 'My Big Idea' run by Global Sisters. The program helped her to identify her strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. With the help of the program, Lina

established a business model and began pitching her business idea.

She says, "I've pitched the business three times. I was very nervous because it was something new for me. But after doing the third one, it was much easier than the first one!"

Lina spent a lot of time developing her networks before she started Robofun.

She networked through her volunteering roles, and at Meetup.com events. She also participated in accelerator programs.

Volunteering at schools meant she was met many teachers, who helped introduce her to other teachers and principals at different schools.

Lina says her mother helped her to start her own business. Lina's mother was hard working and held multiple jobs to help her children succeed.

From an early age, Lina's mother inspired her to achieve her dreams.

When she was a schoolgirl herself, Lina found a role model in her computer teacher who she credits with inspiring her, "My teacher developed lots of competitions for us and kept us constantly engaged. She was well prepared for her lessons and provided us with lots of variety to learn."

Currently, Lina has two business coaches. One from Global Sisters and one from Ygap.

Lina says that it's not easy to manage a business and it's essential to reach out for help if you're unsure of something. Getting advice can help you to make sure you're on the right path.

### **Planning the business**

Although Lina had no formal business plan before starting Robofun, she conducted lots of market research. She did this by reading reports and talking to parents, principals, and schoolgirls.

Her market research included:

- asking parents about their communication preferences,
- talking with school principals about suitable pricing models, and
- asking girls what they wanted to learn.

### **Facing challenges**

Lina established Robofun after struggling to find a job in Australia. She overcame this challenge by starting her own business and giving back to the community.

Time management is also something that Lina struggled with.

To help manage her time and all her responsibilities, she writes a project plan and

**Having role models and developing networks helped her achieve her dream.**

follows it to ensure she gets the results she wants.

When thinking about whether gender presents itself as a challenge when striving to achieve goals, Lina gives the advice: "To any young girl who wants to start their business in STEAM, you can do it and just go for it. You should follow your passion, follow the opportunity, don't wait for the opportunity to come to you... find it and go for it."

### **Next steps**

In the future, and with the help of more time, effort, and money, Lina wants to grow Robofun.

She plans to offer workshops in more areas throughout Victoria, and within five-years aims to make the programs available online so they can be accessed by everyone in Australia.

**" You should follow your passion, follow the opportunity, don't wait for the opportunity to come to you... find it and go for it"**

