

# the cost of adventure

Adventure isn't just about chasing a dream. It requires rigorous planning and attention to detail. But it can reap dividends.

**Story** Natalie Apostolou

**A**s a consultant with Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, James Castrission was well versed in the craft of risk management. Yet the call of adventure meant that he was soon converting his risk assessment skills from the boardroom to navigating the vast swells of the Tasman Sea.

In 2008, Castrission and schoolfriend Justin Jones set out to become the first duo to cross the Tasman Sea in a kayak.

The journey (now known as *Crossing the Ditch* following successful DVD and book releases) charted 3318km from NSW to New Zealand's North Island over 62 days and considerable tribulations.

In a testament to Castrission's strategic planning and analytics, the risk paid off, with the duo now highly sought after in the motivational and corporate speaking circuit and a new epic adventure currently in the development stages.

And yes, they ditched their day jobs.

## RIGOROUS PLANNING

The success of this expedition, like Jessica Watson's solo round the world sailing effort, was founded on a high degree of media attention, supportive sponsors and rigorous planning. And while both of these examples of aquatic adventuring appeared to be grassroots ventures, the financial and advisory efforts of those involved meant that the lead-up to the project was perhaps as epic as the journey.

"No matter what expedition you set out to do, planning is critical. It really is 90 per cent preparation and 10 per cent execution. It is all about getting the planning and risk management right," says Castrission.

Having a supportive employer in Deloitte certainly helped, with the firm giving him time off to complete the trip and providing flexible

working hours in the lead-up, but the project very quickly became an all-consuming entity.

"It was 13 months of risk management work and assessing every possible facet of managing our trip. Initially, we had no idea what the kayak even had to look like to be capable of completing the journey, but it all slowly evolved."

The duo also worked with high-risk project management agency RushLabs, who assisted in planning and executing an intensive risk management, operational and media strategy over 18 months. The agency helped with physical preparation such as food restriction and paradoxical sleep deprivation to get in shape pre-trip and mission rehearsal with advanced simulation modeling. It also handled the practicalities of dealing with Australian and New Zealand Maritime, Police, Customs, Rescue Coordination Centres and media liaison with international press and social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. "The detailed risk management that we carried out with this team covered scenario planning for nearly all situations, ranging from what would happen if we ran out of food to if one of us were lost at sea, and whether the other one would continue on," Castrission says.

So while the adventures themselves appear to be man vs the elements, there is usually a vast team working behind the scenes, whether for love or a cut of the deal.

What quickly emerges when dealing with these elite adventurers is that they operate in a tight knit, supportive community. Castrission and Jones sought the advice of other adventurers including world record base jumper Dr Glen Singleman, who became the duo's doctor. In turn, they ended up advising Jessica Watson on her planning and journey.

## FLY ME TO THE MOON

"Whatever particular adventuring dream you are following these are very expensive trips to put together," cautions Eric Phillips the founder and director of Icetrek Expeditions, which has an Australian monopoly on guided polar expeditions.

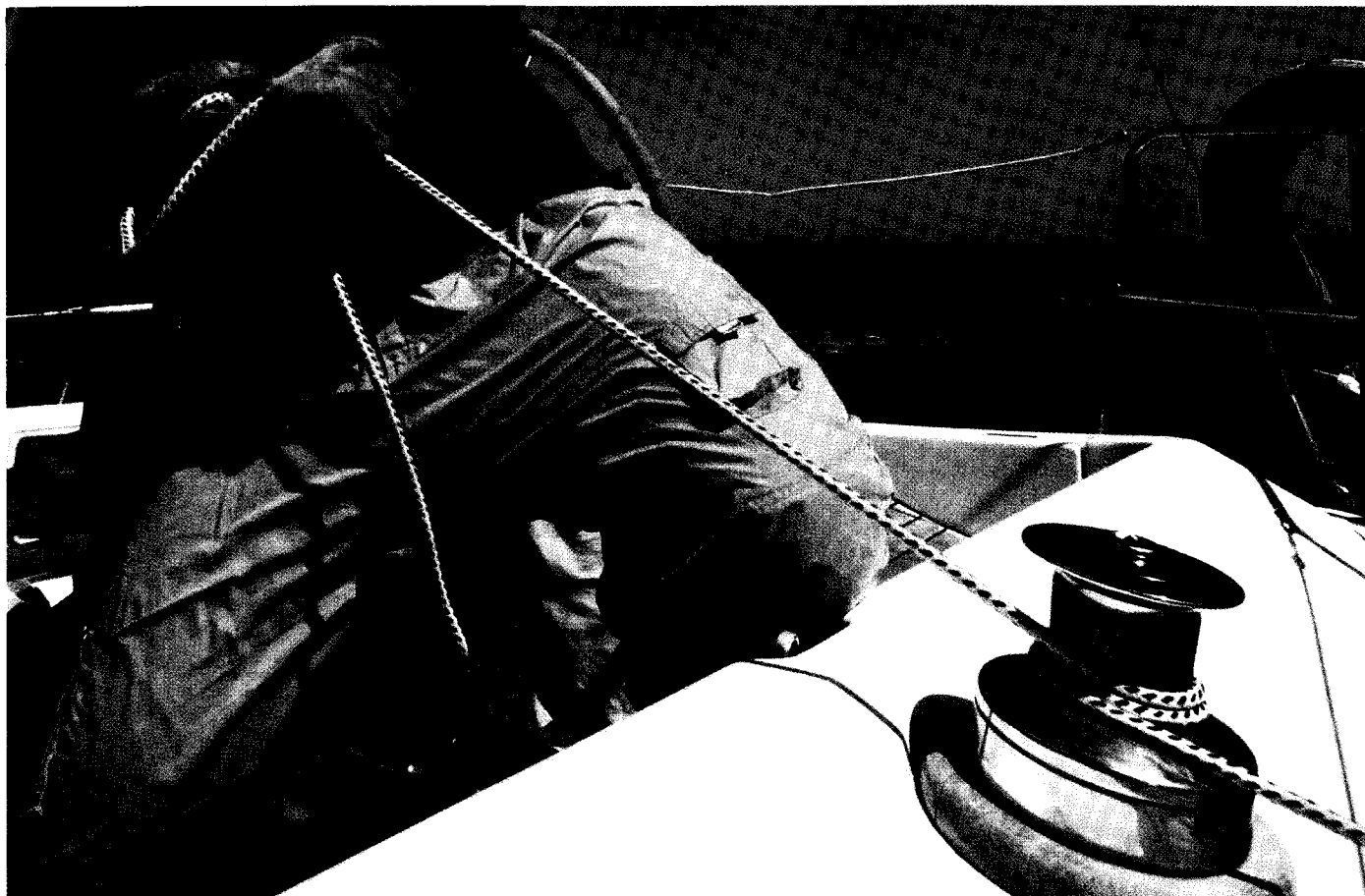
As a card-carrying professional adventurer who has visited every continent on earth, skied the world's four largest icecaps and was one half of the duo to be the first Australians to ski to both the North and South Poles, Phillips has turned his extreme wanderlust into a successful business.

Phillips not only organises guided tours to both Poles for average adrenaline junkies, but is usually the man behind the scenes helping every high and low profile adventurer achieve their polar dreams. Currently he is consulting on ultra-marathon runner and former MP Pat Farmer's attempt to run from the North to South Pole and raise \$US100 million for Red Cross water projects and is also advising Castrission and Jones on their next adventure which will feature the South Pole.

He charges a consultation fee of around \$5000 for such projects which includes logistics advice, liaising with required service providers, organising a polar diet and modifying their equipment. He also offers snow and ice training and has a rich library of Antarctic footage for use on burgeoning adventure websites.

Insurance is a key concern for adrenalin junkies. Professional adventurers like Phillips recommend getting a policy that includes medical, evacuation and rescue insurance from IHI (BUPA) a Danish insurance company which specialises in extreme adventure travellers.

In addition to personal insurance, there is also the need to cover the vessel or equipment



that is involved. Insurance companies work on the principle that travellers who undertake high-risk activities often do so independently and in remote locations. Which is why going for a specialist global insurer that understands adventure travel and the emergency costs associated with remote evacuations is the wisest way, he says.

### FUNDING THE DREAM

Becoming a full-time professional adventurer in 1992, Phillips relied on sponsors for the first 10 years of his career and estimates that he has raised three quarters of a million dollars in sponsorships.

Foundation sponsors included satellite phone network Iridium and Mountain Hardware, both brands aimed squarely for extreme adventure conditions.

Over the last seven years, Phillips says that the sponsorship market has been tough, a condition aggravated by the GFC.

"It is exceedingly difficult to deliver on what you promise, with so many variables associated with completing the journey. So there is the potential for sponsors to be dissatisfied should something derail the adventure," he says.

Adventurers with a proven track record are also more likely to attract the bigger sponsorship dollar, but the rise of digital

platforms and the opportunity to engage with a wider audience is changing the game.

"You need to have the skills and savvy to confront and survive the antarctic environment and you also need to have a certain degree of marketing and business savvy," Phillips says.

Pat Farmer launched his Pole to Pole marathon mission via a YouTube announcement, setting the tone for the digital audience engagement he is planning. Every step of Farmer's journey, which begins this month and ends in the North Pole in early 2012, will be captured by a professional camera crew. Farmer picks up where Jessica Watson's self-filmed documentary, *True Spirit* left off, with his crew sending footage to the internet in real time.

For this emerging breed of adventurers, using the internet and social media to market and chronicle the journey is proving to take the edge off the need of having years of proven experience. "The more you get the word out there, the more sponsors are likely to come on board," Phillips notes.

"Funding the project was probably more difficult than the trans-Tasman trip itself," says Castrission.

From planning to execution *Crossing the Ditch* cost around \$350,000, excluding the manpower time put in by the duo.

With little personal funds to tip in, sponsorship was the only way for the duo to fulfill their ambition. In their bid for sponsorship, they were knocked back by no less than 120 companies.

But rather than walk away defeated, with every rejection they would ask for three bits of advice on how to improve their pitch.

While they did not discern the secret universal pitch formula, Castrission says that the key was tailoring the pitch to meet the needs of the sponsor.

"Every company has a completely different set of requirements for sponsorships and ROI, so you need to ensure that you can offer them what would be a good strategic fit for the brand, whether it is international press and branding on gear or being available to give motivational talks to staff," he says.

ROI is notoriously hard to measure in this particular sponsorships space.

April Whittam, partner at marketing consultancy Strategy House says, "the primary benefit for sponsors – if it is successful like Jess Watson – is the extraordinary media coverage."

In Watson's case, sponsorship was handled by agency, 5 Oceans Media, who crafted a carefully constructed media strategy from the inception of Watson's project to now managing her career and

brand. 5 Oceans Media took care of all sponsorship and media deals in addition to plotting her social media strategy.

While sponsoring such a risky venture, one which could literally end in tragedy at any turn, may be daunting to many companies, for the more lateral thinking sponsorship managers linking to an aspirational adventure is a masterstroke.

Watson's manager Andrew Fraser, CEO of 5 Oceans Media, secured 17 sponsors including major sponsor Ella Baché and Network Ten, News Limited, Panasonic and Hachette. Fraser admits that it was a hard sell. "It would be impossible to tell them it was not risky as that was not true. We simply outlined the meticulous years of preparation that Jess and the team had devoted to this voyage," says Fraser. "And it resonated."

For Ella Baché, the Jessica Watson tie-up brought about a re-positioning of the Ella Baché brand back into a highly aspirational Australian lifestyle space, explains general manager, Pippa Hallas.

"The pioneering spirit that Jess displayed is very much the heritage of this brand. The emotional benefits associated with the brand is something we believe is powerful to Australians, especially during a time when there is so much negativity in the media about the economy," Hallas adds.

Aside from being a great roadtest for Ella Baché products, its branding on Watson's boat sails resulted in brand extension over nine months of global media coverage, digital strategy leveraging off Jess's blog, point of sale, advertising and a competition that saw many people attend a road show with Jessica and the Ella Baché team on her return.

Technology giant Panasonic has established a strong brand association with intrepid adventurers, supporting Rex Pemberton – the youngest Australian to summit Everest – Castrission and Jones and Watson.

Daniel Preiss, the sponsorship manager

for Panasonic Australia says: "The company is proud to be able to supply industry-leading technology to those requiring solutions for mission-critical applications to anyone from Aussie businesses to Aussie adventurers."

The company supported Watson and Castrission and Jones on their ventures by supplying ruggedised communications equipment including laptops and LUMIX cameras. Watson used the technology to upload images and video to her website during the journey.

### TAKING A SLICE OF THE ACTION

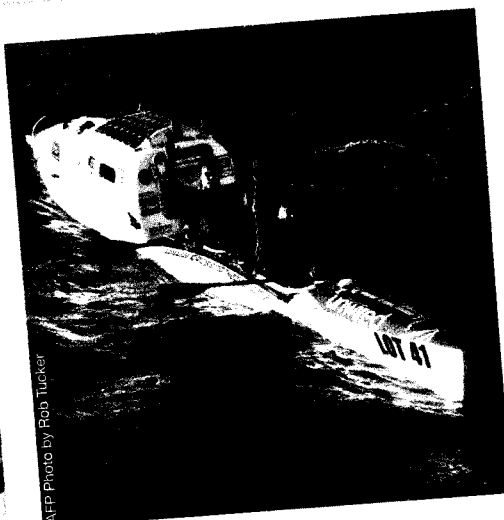
As most self-styled adventurers start out with little to no funds, a financial manager is often last on the list of must-have requirements. However as soon as sponsorship dollars and lucrative deals become a reality, many adventurers choose to outsource their management, both from a brand perspective and in

Photo by Ross Land/Getty Images



James Castrission (L) and Justin Jones step ashore on Ngamotu beach on January 13, 2008 after their 61 day, 2200km kayak adventure across the Tasman Sea – from Forster, NSW, Australia to New Plymouth, New Zealand.

AFP Photo by Rob Tucker



Justin and James waving as they near the coast of New Zealand 124 kilometres North East of New Plymouth, Taranaki on January 9th 2008 at 6pm.



James and Justin arrive to a media frenzy at Ngamotu each at the end of their marathon two-month crossing of the Tasman Sea.

## Funding the project was probably more difficult than the trans-Tasman trip itself

The *Crossing the Ditch* keynote is the perfect complement to open or close a conference, motivate staff or provide an inspirational after-dinner speech. Castrission and Jones are two young, savvy adventurers with an unforgettable presentation that has been enjoyed by more than 110,000 people globally. To find out more, log onto [crossingtheditch.com.au](http://crossingtheditch.com.au)

terms of media and financial management, to an agent like 5 Oceans Media.

The cost of living the dream is expensive and no matter how many media deals or sponsorship opportunities emerge, a serious adventurer will reveal that the journey is never undertaken for the money unless it is for a charity quest.

Fraser warns that the strategy needs to be far more sophisticated. "My advice is to have all boxes ticked before you go. You need to make sure that there are no financial problems when they get back," he says.

While he says Jess Watson is probably a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon of inspiration and marketability, he concedes that sponsors are warning to the calculated risk of associating their brands with inspirational stories.

Castrission and Jones have also joined 5 Oceans Media for the management of their next venture which will be an unassisted trek through Antarctica. They say that during the first few years of plotting their adventure they were just concerned with "getting across the Tasman alive". When sponsors came on board like wireless broadband provider Unwired funding the core cost of designing and building the kayak and other sponsors provided equipment and gear, including thermals and 29 kilos of almonds, the team decided they needed an accountant.

The duo took on Chartered Accountant Carl Dumbrell of CDTL who looked after their financial management.

Eric Phillips also has a trusty accountant looking after his business affairs, which he claims are quite straightforward despite the exotic nature of the business.

Serial adventurer, Tim Medhurst, who got hooked on adventure at 23 after spending 15 months stationed on Antarctica as a glaciologist, has managed to parlay his passion into both business and not-for-profit sectors. He has been involved with Outward Bound, the world's largest outdoor education sector, from instructor to executive director and now board member as well being an adviser to Outward Bound International.


But in recent years he has been adventuring in all corners of the globe for personal, instructional and charity reasons. This year he raised \$100,000 for Australian Rotary Health and bi-polar research via a trip to the North Pole.

When working with Outward Bound he says around two-thirds of donors were anonymous, wishing to support a project with good social benefits. Medhurst says that no matter the intent of the journey, adventuring is more than a hobby.

"It's an interest, a hobby and a passion. You don't do it for money," he adds.

Castrission agrees. While he has already seized on a successful and self-sustaining career as a motivational speaker and author (and is poised to head on to his next adventure), he is motivated by the journey.

"We are just about pushing ourselves out there. In a few years from now we might be settled with a family, so for now we are about the big adventure."

Commenting on Watson's success he says: "Jessica was phenomenal and she has had some lucrative deals but what she is ultimately about is living the life of adventure." 

## FANCY YOUR OWN ADVENTURE?

In need of a break that includes self-sufficiency, decision-making, teamwork and ice travel but without the need for sponsorship deals or a camera crew?

### North Pole Expedition 20-day guided tour package €24,900 (\$34,945)

Package includes: airport transfers, polar clothing, return flights by Antonov-74 aircraft to Ice Station Barneo and Mi-8 helicopter to start point, specialised sleds/equipment and back packs of food for duration. Additional costs include accommodation in Spitsbergen €250 (\$350) per night. Flights ex-Sydney to Norwegian island Spitsbergen: \$3000. Insurance – variable.

## Members > Benefits

## Do you know how healthy you really are?

We all know the possible benefits of living a healthy lifestyle – higher energy levels, improved self-esteem, reduced stress and less chance of illness. The problem is that the pressures of everyday life seem to get in the way.

### NATIONAL HEALTH SURVEY 07/08 KEY FACTS

- > The majority (61 per cent) of Australian adults have a Body Mass Index (BMI) which indicates they are overweight or obese.
- > Excess body fat increases the risk of developing a range of health problems, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and other health disorders.
- > Over 818,000 Australians of all ages (3.9 per cent of the population) have been diagnosed with diabetes.

### LIVING A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE

The Institute's partner health insurer, HCF, recognises that people need more help to live a healthier lifestyle, therefore it is offering the unique My Health Guardian program. For no additional cost, it provides HCF members with a wide range of online-based health planning, monitoring and improvement tools. Members are initially asked to complete a health risk assessment, running through their health history and lifestyle. On completion of the assessment, everyone receives a health rating score out of 100, with any health risks identified.

### YOUR HEALTH ACTION PLAN

After this, it's time to put a health action plan together. My Health Guardian assists by providing the tools to do this and to then track your progress. Online access to expert

health coaches to answer health-related questions is another exciting feature of My Health Guardian. To date, more than 2000 questions have been answered by the health coaches. For a virtual tour of My Health Guardian, click on [hcf.com.au/mhg](http://hcf.com.au/mhg)

### YOUR HCF CORPORATE DISCOUNT

Institute members receive an 8 per cent discount on HCF premiums, potentially saving hundreds of dollars a year. For more information about this special HCF offer, please visit [charteredaccountants.com.au/benefits](http://charteredaccountants.com.au/benefits)

# HCF

More for members.