Forte Business

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CAPABILITY STATEMENT

Gavin Cooke

BCom ACMA Grad Dip Co Sec · Fractional CFO and Business Advisor

Forte Business gives Australian startups, SMEs and organisations under pressure **senior financial leadership without the full-time cost.** Every engagement is led personally by Gavin Cooke, who brings more than 30 years across ASX-listed companies, founder-led businesses and turnarounds. He finds the real problems fast, gives objective advice even when it's hard to hear, and stays to see the decisions through.

SECTOR EXPERIENCE

Mining and resources · Engineering services · Commercial construction · Green technology · Software · Property · Food manufacturing · Labour hire · Professional services · Not-for-profit

30+ years
in finance and commercial leadership, since 1994

5 months
from start-up to a $30m IPO and ASX listing

140% p.a.
growth for four years, from a start-up mid-GFC

$20m → $75m
turnover growth financially managed as interim CFO

CORE CAPABILITIES

1 Fractional and interim CFO

Board-level financial leadership for businesses that need a CFO's judgement but not a full-time hire, including steadying the ship when finance has fallen behind.

- → Financial management of growth from $20m to $75m turnover, working through legacy financial and process issues · Engineering services, 2026
- → Resolved Listing Rules and audit non-compliance; built an in-house finance function to support pilot operations · ASX-listed green technology, 2019
- → Post-acquisition wind-up of redundant subsidiaries · ASX-listed resources, 2013

2 Turnaround and restructuring

Early, clear-eyed action when cash, debt or creditors start to bite. Stabilise first, then fix the causes so the business comes out stronger.

- → Rescued a not-for-profit group burning $800k a month; cleared a $1.8m ATO debt on schedule and restored compliance · Social enterprise, 2013–15
- → Restored profitability to a client turning over $10m a year · Commercial furniture, 2005
- → Financial governance through an adversarial shareholder relationship and attempted refinancing · Engineering services, 2025

3 Transactions, due diligence and capital

Buy-side and sell-side support, from the first offer through due diligence to completion and funding. Knowing when to walk away is part of the job.

- → As founding CFO, managed a $30m IPO and ASX listing in five months, then $17m of project acquisitions · Silver Lake Resources, 2007
- → Negotiated a $6m acquisition, used due diligence to reshape the binding agreement, and supported the finance application to completion · Food manufacturing, 2024
- → Due diligence that uncovered risks ultimately fatal to a proposed acquisition · Green technology, 2024
- → Prepared a client for a management buyout delivering a $3m windfall · Medical supplies, 2006

4 Corporate governance

Boards, compliance and accountability set up properly, without the bureaucracy. Grounded in company secretarial training and listed-company practice.

- → Founding CFO and company secretary: created all governance policies and board processes for an ASX listing · Silver Lake Resources, 2007
- → Resolved numerous governance issues in a "hijacked" business and set a sustainable strategy · Software technology, 2022
- → Western Australian Dux in Applied Corporate Governance · Chartered Secretaries Australia, 2004

5 Start-up and growth

Building businesses from nothing, and building the financial foundations that let growth happen without losing control.

- → Co-founded BubbleDeck in Australia: four years of 140% p.a. growth from a mid-GFC start, now around $30m a year of product delivered nationally. Australia is now the world's largest user of BubbleDeck. · Commercial construction
- → Co-founded a business management service for Perth SMEs, with its own tools and models for analysis and advice · Business advisory, 2003
- → Financial modelling, business case and funding strategy for a $13m mixed-use development, completed in 2018 · Property, 2012

6 Systems, process and cost

Finance operations, controls and processes that match how the business actually runs, and costs that match what it can carry.

- → Targeted $12m a year in savings across about 250 suppliers · ASX-listed resources, 2013
- → Introduced centralised national processes to a previously locally run business · Knight Frank, global property, 1999
- → Overhauled an ISO 9001 quality system to integrated management system standard · Gibson Quai, 2000
- → Comprehensive business review uncovering numerous risks ahead of a potential sale · Labour hire, 2024
- → Audit-ready controls and improved governance for stewardship of a c. $16m corpus · Not-for-profit, 2026

IN PRACTICE

CASE STUDY · FINANCIAL TURNAROUND

A not-for-profit group, weeks from running out of cash

THE POSITION
$250k cash against $1m of current liabilities, burning $800k a month, a $1.8m overdue tax bill and accounts more than a year late.

THE WORK
Weekly cash forecasting, a payment arrangement with the ATO, overheads cut back to capacity, and a full balance sheet clean-up with the auditors.

SIX WEEKS IN
Average cash balance restored to $600k.

OUTCOME
Tax arrangement completed on time, operations at break-even, $100k a month of added gross profit, and an unqualified audit within the deadline.

"Without Gavin I don't believe the organisation would have survived."

Andrew Johnson, Hall Chadwick WA

How an engagement works

1. **Fit check**
   An honest first conversation. If Forte isn't right, we'll say so and point you somewhere that is.
2. **The Pathfinder**
   An objective review of the whole business to find root causes and the few levers that matter most.
3. **Better systems**
   Financial and management processes set up and run on a daily-to-annual rhythm.
4. **Discipline**
   Alongside you for the long haul, keeping focus on what matters and cutting what doesn't.

CAREER FOUNDATIONS

1994–1999 · Corporate
Site, corporate accounting and internal audit at WMC Resources, a major ASX-listed miner. Corporate services at Knight Frank, a global property business.

2000–2007 · Growth and listing
Financial controller at Gibson Quai through its sale to an ASX-listed parent and a complementary acquisition. Founding CFO and company secretary of Silver Lake Resources.

2003 onwards · Advisory
Co-founded a business advisory practice for Perth SMEs, leading to interim CFO, turnaround, transaction and review engagements across resources, technology, engineering, property and more.

2008 onwards · Founder
Co-founder and commercial director of BubbleDeck in Australia, from start-up to national market leader.

WAYS TO ENGAGE

Strategic Partner
Reporting, forecasting and a weekly management rhythm.

Growth and Capital Readiness
Adds active finance operations plus raise and refinance support.

Institutional CFO
Near full-time leadership for M&A, complexity or turnaround.

Fixed monthly retainers, never hourly rates. Fixed-fee projects are available for fundraises, M&A, interim cover and strategic reviews.

QUALIFICATIONS

Chartered Management Accountant (ACMA)
CIMA, 2000

Graduate Diploma in Company Secretarial Practice
Chartered Secretaries Australia, 2004 · WA Dux

Bachelor of Commerce
La Trobe University, 1993 · Invited to undertake Honours

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