



Joshua Nicholls, founder, Platinum Electrical Contractors

Working on your future

When times are good, people spend money on their homes, boosting the value with improvements, extensions and face-lifts. When times are tough, people invest in their home rather than buy a new one. Whatever the economic climate, there is always demand for building services in the domestic market – and many businesses also incorporate a broader sweep of nursing homes, motels, hotels, restaurants and offices. So why pay for a franchise when you could start up a business of your own? In a nutshell, you're more likely to succeed. By Domini Stuart

It can take years of trial and error to establish the processes and systems that will work most effectively for a new business. In a good franchise, the work has already been done. With instant access to a vast store of knowledge and experience, a franchisee is primed to make a profit from day one.

It's common for would-be business

owners to feel strangled by red tape. Again, a good franchisor will have smoothed the way. Help, support and training are ongoing and freely available. And fellow franchisees can be very generous with their time – when you're part of a team, there's sure to be someone who can understand a problem and help you solve it.

Within the building services sector, some franchises offer qualified tradespeople a chance to run their own business while others require no specific skills. There are many low-cost options. And, while most involve some physical work, sophisticated equipment has removed much of the hard labour.

Choose carefully and do your due

diligence and the right franchise will provide opportunities for profit and growth as well as lifestyle and personal satisfaction.

Concrete Taxi

Apart from water, concrete is the most commonly used material on earth. It is also one of the most difficult to move around, particularly in small quantities.

"The big agitator trucks you see on the roads aren't appropriate for the small end of the market," says general manager Peter Carey. "Economically it's just not viable to mix small amounts."

It took years of research and development to perfect a way of manufacturing concrete on site in small Hino trucks. Now, this has proved to be a highly efficient way of servicing a niche market that holds no interest for the main players.

"We give excellent service in locations which are inaccessible to traditional trucks," says Carey.

Franchisees need nothing more than a truck and the materials carried onboard, so it's easy to operate from home. The

The right franchise...may already know how to swing a hammer but we teach them how to run their business, so they must be teachable and willing to take advice on board

physical work is not excessive and hours are flexible, including weekend and night work.

"We look for franchisees with a real commitment to customer service," says Carey. "We can teach people with no practical experience to mix specification concrete within four days of training."

Franchises cost \$50,000 plus \$130,000 for the fully-equipped truck. There is an opportunity to build the business, with several of our franchisees already employing casual or part-time accredited operators.

"We currently have 10 franchisees in Brisbane, two in Sydney and six in Perth," says Carey. "Master franchises in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are logical developments for 2010."

CPR – Complete Property Rejuvenation

Since 1998 CPR has been breathing new life into the property market.

Franchisees work with estate agents and vendors to maximise the sale or rental value of a property by improving presentation, inside and out. They are trained to provide a written report and quote, both based around computerised template, then complete most of the work themselves. No more than basic handyman skills are needed as preferred contractors are brought in whenever licensed or trade skills are required.

"Our franchisees include a career chef from the navy, a graphic designer, a printer and a plumber," says founder Colin Grey.

The initial investment of \$38,000 plus GST



Concrete Taxi



Complete Property Rejuvenation – after

includes a generous territory, operations manual, and high levels of ongoing support. A week of in-house training covers all aspects of running a business including health and safety, presentation requirements, communication, product knowledge and, importantly, how to quote. During the following three weeks of training in the field the franchisee is already earning an income.

With eight franchisees in Victoria and Western Australia Grey is eager to expand into other states, particularly New South Wales.

"The biggest challenge we face is keeping up with the workload – we're having to turn down work as the franchisees are all fully booked," he says. "It would be easy to accept every franchise applicant that comes through the door but we're very selective. We're more interested in being the best franchisor in the space than the biggest."

Platinum Electrical Contractors

Joshua Nicholls was just 22 when he started Platinum Electrical Contractors in 2001; by 2006 his business had grown more than 1200 per cent. In 2008, he started franchising and now, with four franchisees successfully established, he's looking for more licensed electricians with

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"passion, enthusiasm, vision, stability and the desire to make a difference".

It took Nicholls two years to develop a world-class franchise system suitable for national expansion.

"Now we provide an opportunity for electricians to build a business that allows them to be off the tools and managing their own electrical business," he says. "Our ideal franchisees are ambitious, licensed electricians who want to grow their business to at least three or four vans."

Nicholls grew his own business to 30 employees in five years and sees no reason why a franchisee shouldn't do it even faster.



"They start day one with all the systems and procedures and tricks of the trade in place," he says. "I had to develop them as I went along."

Franchisees also benefit from the publicity surrounding Nicholls' personal achievements, which include a number of prestigious business awards. Another strong selling point is that Platinum Electrical is a certified ISO9001 quality endorsed company.

"Certification requires compulsory auditing every nine months to ensure our company still adheres to quality practice," he says. "It assures our customers that our commitment to quality is not a one off event but a culture that will continue to grow and develop."

Slique

Slique is a treatment range to restore, preserve and protect all types of natural and man-made stone and tile surfaces. Each one has been developed for specific stone types and formulated at the cutting edge of chemical technology.

"It's a physical job, but it's also highly technical," says managing director Garry Phillips. "Franchisees will be trained on aspects of geology and chemistry as well as the technical processes to do the work so we're looking for good brains as well as a bit of brawn."

Slique opened its first branch in Auckland in January 2004 then a second branch in Sydney in September 2005. By

this time, the owners had 14 years' industry experience, including the multi-million dollar renovation of hundreds of metres of basalt in the Grand Atrium of the Auckland War Memorial Museum. They then spent over five years developing the technical systems, processes and expertise into a franchise structure. Rather than launch in the middle of an economic downturn they waited; the first franchisees are available now.

An investment of \$35,000 plus GST is needed, along with the equipment. This includes two weeks of training in the office and special training lab followed by three to four weeks on-site and ongoing sales and technical support.

"Slique franchisees need just one job a fortnight to break even, or one job a week to make a comfortable living," says Phillips. "As their office will be based at their home it's a great way to combine an excellent living with lifestyle."

Smith & Sons Renovations & Extensions

According to founding director Corey Passey, Smith & Sons set out to create a contemporary and professional renovation and extension business which would set them apart in the industry.

"We also wanted clients to realise that, while we were using the latest building systems, tools and technology, we still

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