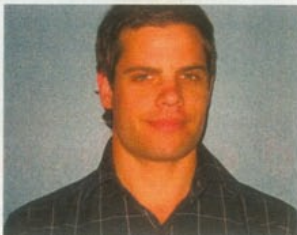


The ORIX Award for Fastest Growing Small Business

Every business hopes to grow. Yet managing growth is perhaps the toughest management challenge of them all. The finalists in this category are therefore inspiring examples of what it takes to succeed, but also managerial role models any business would do well to examine to learn how to grow successfully as well as sustainably.



Platinum Electrical Contractors

LOCATION: New South Wales
ONLINE: www.platinumelectrical.com.au

Anyone who has ever waited for an overdue tradesperson to show up or return a phone call has surely wondered what would happen if a smart business person applied modern customer service practices to the trades. Joshua Nicholls is just that business person, and his company Platinum Electrical Contractors is the result. Founded in 2001 when Nicholls was just 22, the company now employs 21 staff including 16 tradesmen and apprentices, operates a fleet of seven vehicles and boasts turnover exceeding \$1.5 million. With this kind of growth in just 3.5 years, the company seems destined for even bigger things in the future.



Mr Rentals Toowoomba

LOCATION: Queensland
ONLINE: www.mrentals.com.au

Few start-up franchisees can boast of having achieved the goals in their business plan a year ahead of schedule. But Mark and Liz Norman of Mr Rentals' Toowoomba store can make that claim and more. The couple took on the franchise in 2003 and achieved their 1000th rental within two years. Careful attention to cash flow and other issues made the couple confident they could repeat their success and they opened a second store in the nearby town of Ipswich, in the process becoming the first members of the 49-store franchise to own and operate two stores.



Ripe Maternity Wear

LOCATION: Victoria
ONLINE: www.ripe.com.au

A designer of contemporary maternity apparel, Ripe has enjoyed 30 per cent annual growth for four years, while increasing export sales by 50 per cent and maintaining a profit/sales ratio of 18 per cent. The company continues to fund its growth through cash flow. Total sales now exceed \$5.5 million with \$2.5 million generated by export sales. The company is also growing in more ways than one: owner/director Kate Beaconsfield was expecting at the time of writing and co-director Lisa Balakas already has three children, making their joint achievement even more noteworthy.

The Australian Business Limited Award for Best Medium Business



Australian Business Limited's judges found selecting finalists in this category a very challenging task. After long deliberations, Rockcote Enterprises' environmental benefits, RedBalloon Days' innovation and superior customer service, and PIVoD's technical expertise and export success made each stand out as worthy finalists.



PIVoD technologies

LOCATION: Western Australia
ONLINE: www.pivod.com

PIVoD installs and maintains large-scale video implementations used for either displaying video material in museum-like environments, or management of multiple video streams for applications such as security cameras. Established in 1999 and already boasting a turnover of \$7.7 million and clients like the National Maritime Museum, the company has a great local success story to tell. Export wins in the US, Canada and even the world's largest museum complex in Saudi Arabia make this business a more than worthy finalist.



Rockcote Enterprises

LOCATION: Queensland
ONLINE: www.rockcote.com.au

Every successful business has a vision, but Rockcote's is exceptionally bold: by the year 2016 the Queensland company plans to create Australia's first completely sustainable building. The ambition is a natural one, given the company's recent development product line of 'architectural coatings', which enhance the appearance and durability of buildings without using volatile chemicals that harm the environment. Revenue growth of 20 per cent over the last two years is a clear indicator of the market's response to these products, and marks Rockcote as a company to watch.



RedBalloon Days

LOCATION: New South Wales
ONLINE: www.redballoondays.com.au

As anyone who has ever opened a present to find the less-than-exciting sight of socks or undies can tell you, buying a gift is not an easy chore. Enter RedBalloon Days. Its website offers individuals or corporations a vast array of experiences, such as massages or helicopter flights, to give as gifts. Founded in 2001 and based in Sydney, the company has quickly expanded to cover Australia and New Zealand, growing annual revenue to \$4.2 million along the way, and becoming one of Australia's most-visited online destinations.