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It is never easy to enter a market with large, well established competitors, but that didn't deter Michael Kitchener, founder of Kitcheners® Kitchens. Armed with talent, passion and an impressive website, in 2005 Michael launched the business from his Bondi apartment. In his first year of operation he sold 80 kitchens and then, when his wife had a baby and he was ousted from the spare bedroom, Michael established his first showroom in Alexandria. Today the business employs 14 people, has a compound annual growth of 80 per cent and an annual turnover exceeding \$4 million.



Kitcheners® Kitchens provides custom built kitchens that sit between the do-it-yourself market and luxury kitchens, with an average client spending between \$15,000 and \$25,000. To differentiate himself from competitors, Michael understood he quickly needed to build his brand to survive.

To achieve this, Michael invited Iain "Huey" Hewitson to be an ambassador for the business. As well as promoting Kitcheners® Kitchens, Iain cooks from one of its kitchens on his popular television show. Michael says he is very excited about the relationship. "After talking to Huey, I realised that he also values quality and style which are the key values we focus on," he says. "Huey has had more than 40 years experience working in kitchens, so we know if he endorses a product, it is one the public can trust."

The business has also gained credibility by entering into strategic partnerships with established identities like Blum, Bosch and Caesarstone®.

Understanding the growing awareness of ecological considerations in consumer buying decisions, Kitcheners® Kitchens was the first kitchen company to be endorsed by Climate Friendly, which invests in Third World countries. Kitcheners® offsets 100 per cent of its carbon usage and promotes the use of energy efficient products and appliances.

Despite now having a showroom in Sydney and Melbourne and plans to expand nationally, the website remains an important part of the business. Michael says that most people do their research on new kitchens online and about 70 to 80 per cent of his customers buy before visiting the showroom. More than half of Kitcheners'® customers never visit the showroom.

The website provides an opportunity for Kitcheners'® to build credibility and trust. Customers are invited to download informative e-books that demystify the process of creating a beautiful, functional and affordable kitchen. There is also information on the needs of specific markets like families and older people. The website also generates trade inquiries.

Although the last year has been challenging for the industry in general, Michael has been able to garner every increasing media exposure. Kitcheners® has featured in over 20 editorials in the last twelve months, and Michael is regularly quoted as one of the key industry authority figures.

Supporting the business's high profile are proven systems and plans. Michael says that tracking and

monitoring orders through the design, manufacturing and installation process are vitally important and the business also closely follows its strategic plan. He says, "Every six months we have a managerial meeting, then a staff meeting, to review our steps to determine whether it's working or whether we need to introduce new plans."

As Kitcheners® Kitchens has rapidly grown, its success has been widely acknowledged. Highlights of 2009 include the prestigious 2009 City of Sydney Business Award. Kitcheners® won the Best Household & General Retail Business Award as well as the coveted overall Best Business award from one hundred and thirteen finalists. Kitcheners® Kitchens was also a finalist in the 2009 New South Wales Telstra Small Business Award in the MYOB Small Business category. Highlights of 2009 include the prestigious 2009 City of Sydney Business Award. Kitcheners® won the Best Household & General Retail Business Award as well as the coveted overall Best Business award from one hundred and thirteen finalists. Kitcheners® Kitchens was also a finalist in the 2009 New South Wales Telstra Small Business Award in the MYOB Small Business category.

The business was also a finalist for the Kitchen and Bathroom Design Institute (KBDi) Design og awards and was shortlisted for the HIA Housing Awards 2009.

Source: DSBN

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