

Guys need good grooming just like the girls

■ Carolyn Herbert

GROWTH TIPS

COMPANY: Guys Grooming.

BUSINESS: Male grooming services and products.

GROWTH TIPS: Reward customer loyalty, harness referrals and maintain a good online presence.

NATHAN Ahern thought that if he was tired of visiting beauty parlours and day spas to get his regular wax, chances were he wasn't alone.

In that case, therefore, he believed there was a market for a salon that tailored such services specifically for men, and offered a more 'man-friendly' environment.

Joining forces with his good friend Leycester Cory, Mr Ahern opened Guys Grooming in 2008, Perth's first ever 'male grooming lounge' to provide hair and body grooming services exclusively for men.

"In all the places you could go all you would see were flower arrangements and candles and the only magazines you could read were *OK!* or *Woman's Day*, which really didn't cater for what I wanted," Mr Ahern said.

"I wanted the waxing but I didn't have the surroundings that made me feel like I wanted to come back, so joining the two concepts together seemed like the natural decision."

Three years on, Guys Grooming has grown its staff from four to 13, experienced a strong increase in turnover during the past two years and has moved into a new 450 square metre premises, the largest space for such a business in Australia.

A 'chill out lounge' where clients can get a complementary beer, 15 flatscreen TVs with Foxtel and oversized leather recliners are just some of the ways Guys Grooming make 'manscaping' more pleasurable.

But it took the pair more than a year to build up their client base and convince men that it was perfectly acceptable for them to get a wax, a facial or a massage.

"Even at our first premises at 811 Hay Street, we had to convince the landlord that we were a grooming venue and not a brothel," Mr Ahern said.

In retrospect, Mr Ahern said, 2008 was the worst time to start a new business, with interest rates rising and the GFC peaking in September that year.

"Perth definitely lost its way a little bit during that time, but our biggest issue was that our services were seen as a luxury and not a necessity," he said.

"We were going to employ another hairstylist and a groomer but we couldn't; we were sustainable at that level of four staff, but we just couldn't grow."

To encourage clients to continue to use its services during the GFC, Mr Ahern and Mr Cory came up with several loyalty and discount programs.

"We would document and record the value for every client who had any one of our services; after eight visits we would average out the

value and give that back to them in free service dollars on the ninth visit," Mr Ahern said.

"We also gave all of our clients a 'refer a mate' card, so they'd hand us the card and we'd give them 20 dollars off and also give the guy who referred him \$20 off."

In addition, the pair kept their 'day jobs' – Mr Ahern as manager of a medical waste company and Mr Cory as a marketing manager for a paving company. This allowed them to regularly inject funds into the business, Mr Ahern said.

Mr Ahern's wife, a hair stylist with more than 20 years' experience, manages the day-to-day running of Guys Grooming.

Mr Cory looks after the business's marketing and online presence and Mr Ahern focuses his energy on the administration side of things.

With turnover growing by more than 40 per cent in the 2009-2010 financial year, the pair knew that it was time to expand the business.

"We were looking for new premises for nine months; we knew we had to expand because we couldn't service some of the clients coming in and that was because we only employed enough hairdressers for (the number of) chairs," Mr Ahern said.

He attributed the growth of the business to the reward programs implemented during the GFC, and the amount of time and money spent on advertising and the website.

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"We've advertised on radio and on channels commonly watched by guys, like GO and ONE HD and even in lifestyle magazines," Mr Ahern told *WA Business News*.

"But our Google AdWords campaign contributes to about 30 per cent of our advertising spend and that is because we knew from day one that a website would be a massive way for people to see who we are and what we do."

The new Hay Street premises cost more than \$650,000 to fit out, but Mr Ahern said the size, location and proximity to parking made the site an obvious choice.

Mr Ahern said he and Mr Cory would now focus on expanding their corporate client base and marketing their services to companies as a way of rewarding employees.

"We want these companies to know we are available to help them find ways to reward and rejuvenate their staff; for instance you could bring in three or four guys who have achieved a target for the month or have excelled and that could be their reward," he said.



WAX ON, WAX OFF: Nathan Ahern (left) and Leycester Cory saw a business opportunity in the provision of hair and body grooming services in a 'man-friendly environment'. Photo: Grant Currall

A New Era in WA Bauxite Alumina

Bauxite Alumina Joint Ventures is a partnership between Bauxite Resources Limited and Yankuang Resources Ltd.

On April 1, 2011 Bauxite Resources and Yankuang Resources signed a series of Joint Ventures and formed Bauxite Alumina Joint Ventures Pty Ltd (BAJV).

The BAJV has a dual vision - to export high grade bauxite and develop an alumina refinery in south-west Western Australia.

The Darling Range in south-west WA is one of the most important bauxite and alumina producing regions in the world. This area produces 23% of the world's alumina and the refineries located in this region are amongst the most cost-efficient due partly to the quality of the Darling Range bauxite.

The joint ventures between Bauxite Resources and Yankuang Resources provide significant investment opportunities for mining and alumina refining in WA.

A scoping study for the development of an alumina refinery has commenced. The findings from this will be used for prefeasibility studies and a Bankable Feasibility Study, estimated for completion by the end of 2013.

As a progressive joint venture, BAJV embraces the opportunity to develop a sustainable, long term business that is a positive contributor to the Western Australian community.



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Operation - Sept 2009



North Bindoon Trial Site.
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