

2010's Hot 30 Under 30

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It's the numbers that make the 2010 edition of [SmartCompany's Hot 30 Under 30](#) so impressive. The businesses run by this group of rising entrepreneurs aged 30 years and under have more than \$100 million in combined revenue.



They employ well over 600 people.

On average, their start up costs were under \$100,000 and in most cases their companies have been in operation for less than five years.

And after breezing through the GFC, this group of young guns is looking to really ramp up their growth as the economy heads back towards top speed.

There were two main criteria for this year's list – entrepreneurs had to be 30 years or under and their business had to have at least \$1 million in annual sales.

So how are they doing it? Here are 10 strategy secrets from the Hot 30:

Live to serve

As in the wider Australian economy, the clear trend from the list is the shift towards services – 18 of the 30 businesses on the list are service companies riding the outsourcing trend, typically in a very specific niche.

Leverage your tech edge

What sets these younger entrepreneurs apart is their ability to use technology in different ways to give themselves an edge.

At Skye Recruitment, Kye McDonald has two full-time software developers working on his IT and telecom systems to get an advantage. At luxury furniture retailer Firdarsi, Neil Singh and Candida Stephens have used technology to eliminate costs such as showrooms and warehouses and deliver better prices to customers. At 199BUDDY, Rupert Imhoff's SMS services business relies on a global network of staff, all connected online around the clock.

Your idea doesn't need to be revolutionary

Many entrepreneurs think they need a completely original idea or a brilliant new product to succeed. Not true – simply delivering a better product or service than currently exists is enough to build a strong business.

Michelle Hampton and Susan Wood started their PR firm with the idea that their bigger rivals were overpriced and delivering poor service. Now they work with international brand names such as Colgate, Red Bull and Quiksilver.

Look overseas for great ideas

Rupert Imhoff's 199Buddy was based on an idea he saw overseas, as was David Hancock's IT services business Geeks2U. Getting ahead of the local market by looking overseas is not a guarantee of success, but it can provide a strong building block.

The younger you are, the less you've got to lose

Starting a business when you are young can be tough, particularly when you're trying to scrape together start up funds. But a number of entrepreneurs on the Hot 30 say this is also an advantage – the less you've got, the less you've got to lose.

"I wanted to determine whether I could start and run a successful company," says Brendan Green of Western Australian occupational hygiene business Green Consulting Group. "The risk of failure was minimal as I would not be affected financially or from a personal perspective long-term."

Get advice – and plenty of it

Whether it is a mentor, a board or directors, an accountant, a legal adviser or an industry expert, soaking up as much advice as possible is crucial to success.

Hire well

Entrepreneurs of all ages will tell you that good staff are one of the most important ingredients for success. For young and less experienced business owners, this is especially true.

"Focus on making sure that you are working with like-minded, ambitious people," IF Telecom co-founder Andrew Branson says. "The people in the business are by far the most important factor."

Fight to persuade suppliers to work with you

One of the biggest challenges the Hot 30 talk about is convincing suppliers – be it suppliers of products or, more commonly, suppliers of funds such as banks and financiers – that young entrepreneurs should be taken seriously. The experience of the Hot 30 shows that it doesn't get any easier, although success has a funny way of opening doors.

Systemise it

The explosive growth of a young business can be difficult for an entrepreneur to manage and the implementation of strong financial, HR and administrative systems is crucial to coping with growth.

"Systems are critical for continuity and training of staff," says Brendan Green. "Have business processes on paper and continually review how well it all works."

Listen to the market

Perhaps it's their ability to tap into social networks or maybe it's just because they have grown up as big consumers of information. Whatever the case, the Hot 30 concentrate heavily on listening to customers and gathering market intelligence.

"The market will tell you what you should do, just make sure you're listening," says Hard Hat's Daniel Monheit. "If you're young and just getting started it's okay to not have 100% clarity on what or where you should be. As long as you're out there meeting the right people and not sitting behind a desk, opportunities will present themselves."

Meet the Hot 30 Under 30:

David Hancock

In just five years David Hancock has grown his on-site computer repairs and support company Geeks2u to employ more than 100 staff across the country.

Read more on [David Hancock](#)

[Justus Wilde](#)

Justus Wilde founded his Sydney-based eCommerce specialist agency in 2006, frustrated at what he saw as the strong technology focus taken by other agencies that forgot to address the strategic issues for their clients.

Read more on [Justus Wilde](#)

[Daniel Monheit & Justin Kabbani](#)

Like many digital agencies, Hard Hat Digital is walking the path from being a web development company towards being a full-service digital-based advertising agency.

Read more on [Daniel Monheit & Justin Kabbani](#)

[Alan Meyerson](#)

Alan Meyerson spotted the opportunity to take over the reins of teleshopping company Danoz Direct in 2004 and immediately began listening to customers to find out what they really wanted.

Read more on [Alan Meyerson](#)

[Brett Lucas](#)

Brett Lucas' family opened its first video rental business as an independent store in Huonville, Tasmania.

Read more on [Brett Lucas](#)

[Rhys Hayes](#)

Rhys Hayes is not even 30, yet already his digital marketing and communications agency IE is almost a decade old and employs 35 people.

Read more on [Rhys Hayes](#)

[Neil Singh & Candida Stephens](#)

Fidarsi started life as an online retail store for high-end luxury designer furniture, eliminating much of the traditional costs such as showrooms and warehouses. That means it could sell quality, comfortable designer furniture at a fraction of the retail price.

Read more on [Neil Singh & Candida Stephens](#)

[Zoe Warne](#)

Zoe Warne started her online marketing agency, August, with partner Daniel Banik in 2005 – albeit in the month of September.

Read more on [Zoe Warne](#)

[Eugeni Tsvetnenko](#)

The colourful life of Russian-born Perth-based entrepreneur Eugeni "Zhenya" Tsvetnenko has included everything from allegations of running a mobile SMS scam through to flying US rap star Snoop Dogg to perform at his 29th birthday.

Read more on [Eugeni Tsvetnenko](#)

[Brendan Green](#)

When Brendan Green founded his consulting business in 2005 few people in the mining industry had heard of the concept of occupational hygiene.

Read more on [Brendan Green](#)

[Pete Williams](#)

In only seven years Pete Williams has sunk his fingers into a wide range of pies. His Preneur Group includes a nationwide telecommunications equipment seller (Infiniti Telecommunications), a message-on-hold provider (On Hold Advertising) and a boutique marketing consulting company (Preneur Marketing).

Read more on [Pete Williams](#)

[Andrew Teoh](#)

Andrew Teoh founded his mobile software business Mint Wireless with brother Alex back in 2006 with less than \$500,000.

Read more on [Andrew Teoh](#)

[Jeremy Levitt](#)

Jeremy Levitt quit his job at law firm Allens Arthur Robinson to become an entrepreneur, founding two equally successful businesses in separate sectors. He says it was a hard move to go from "a harbour view to a desk in my bedroom", but the gamble paid off.

Read more on [Jeremy Levitt](#)

[Andrew & Richard Branson](#)

Andrew and Richard Branson set up IF Telecom with the specific aim of catering to SMEs. "Most small businesses were paying far too much for their telecommunications and receiving a very poor or at times, non-existent service," Andrew says.

Read more on [Andrew and Richard Branson](#)

[Anthea Hendry](#)

Anthea Hendry started Hypoxi Australia after being convinced by sister Ariana that the pair could emulate the success of Hypoxi treatment clinics in Europe.

Read more on [Anthea Hendry](#)

[Costa Anastasiadis](#)

When he was 19, Costa Anastasiadis thought he would follow his love of soccer and eventually scored a professional contract with the English Scarborough football club. But after only three years, he was forced to return home due to struggles and health issues in the family business.

Read more on [Costa Anastasiadis](#)

[Kye Macdonald](#)

Kye Macdonald founded Skye Recruitment with his wife, Sophie, in 2006 and found success by focusing on recruitment for the civil construction, building, engineering and oil and gas markets.

Read more on [Kye Macdonald](#)

[Lee Corbitt](#)

Lee Corbitt founded recruitment company Marble Group with business partner Gary Denton to create a level of professionalism he felt was lacking in the industry. There has been one ongoing challenge - to identify those with the talent and integrity Marble demands.

Read more on [Lee Corbitt](#)

[Michael Rosenbaum](#)

Michael Rosenbaum is at the top of Australia's largest online department store, DealsDirect, with revenue of \$100 million and a customer base growing by the day.

Read more on [Michael Rosenbaum](#)

[Michelle Hampton & Susan Wood](#)

Susan Wood and Michelle Hampton launched Magnum PR in 2005 with the goal of providing large and SME clients with cost-effective PR, and have quickly built a client base that includes big-name brands including Red Bull, Nudie, Colgate-Palmolive, Quiksilver, Max Brenner, Wagamama and SumoSalad.

Read more on [Michelle Hampton & Susan Wood](#)

[Rupert Imhoff](#)

Rupert Imhoff's premium SMS service 199Buddy works on a simple premise – text in a question, any question, and Imhoff's team will try to answer it. The business, set up in 2006, now has revenue heading towards \$2 million and Imhoff's team has grown to 95.

Read more on [Rupert Imhoff](#)

[Ruslan Kogan](#)

If you can't buy it – make it. This is the premise on which Ruslan Kogan based his successful business, Kogan Technologies, and the experiment paid off.

Read more on [Ruslan Kogan](#)

[Saxon Mitchell](#)

Saxon Mitchell started his work in events management from his bedroom when he was 19, dreading the possibility he may only earn standard hospitality wages. He built up the company, then called ICE Events, to earn over \$1 million by the time he was 25, before selling it and moving onto Venue Management Services.

Read more on [Saxon Mitchell](#)

[Tristan White](#)

Tristan White founded The Physio Co. when he was 24 after wanting to offer a service combining traditional rehabilitation programs with a type of customer service usually encountered in a retail environment. It has since exploded in popularity, generating \$1.2 million in revenue and recording 52% growth last year.

Read more on [Tristan White](#)

[Wai Hong Fong](#)

Shortly after graduating from university, Wai Hong Fong had two options: take an IT development job or have a go at building an online retail business. He chose the latter and with his business partners started approaching suppliers at trade shows to see if anyone was willing to give them anything to sell on eBay.

Read more on [Wai Hong Fong](#)

[Alana Chang](#)

It's true all that glitters isn't gold, but it could be just as lucrative. Alana Chang, along with her sister Lauren, has transformed her Moi Moi jewellery chain into a million-dollar business by gaining the exclusive rights to sell the rare jewel moissanite.

Read more on [Alana Chang](#)

Up and comers:

Simon Goodrich

Age: 29

Company: Portable.TV

Sector: Internet, entertainment

Simon Goodrich co-founded Portable.tv in 2006 with Andrew Apostola with the idea of creating a film festival for portable devices, and has turned that into a full web design and eCommerce business. Portable recently opened an office in New York City to service clients in the global fashion industry.

Nick Holmes a Court

Age: 28

Company: BuzzNumber

Sector: Internet, marketing and advertising

Holmes a Court founded BuzzNumbers in 2007 to help companies understand how their brands are being discussed online. His previous boss didn't listen to his idea – and might wish he had as BuzzNumbers heads towards turning over its first \$1 million next year.

Michael Fox, Jodie Fox, Michael Knapp

Age: 28, 28 and 29

Company: Shoes of Prey

Sector: Internet, retail

Former Googlers Michael Fox and Michael Knapp had wanted to work on a project together since becoming friends at law school, but it took Jodie Fox's passion for shoes to bring them together in Shoes of Prey, a site that allows women to design their own shoes. It launched in late-2009, and already more than 250,000 pairs of shoes have been designed.

Nick Crocker and Ben Johnson

Age: 26 and 26

Company: Native Digital

Sector: Internet

Nick Crocker and Ben Johnson set out to create digital campaigns that were thoughtful and engaging, and in 2009 launched the first music download chart, Wearehunted.com in conjunction with Wotnews. They also convinced the record label EMI Australia to launch the first ever blog from a music label.

Sascha Voevodin

Age: 30

Company: Votech Industries

Sector: IT

Sascha Voevodin saw a niche in providing flexible software for the hospitality industry that could take information from any system and let its customers know that they have a problem even before the customer does. Last year it won a client in Taiwan, whose software is rebadged by 50 different suppliers around the world.

Dan Joyce

Age: 30

Company: RedRoomDVD

Sector: Retail, entertainment

It was only five years ago that Dan Joyce and Nic Di Venuto spotted the potential for the DVD rental vending machines that were popping up across Europe to also work in Australia. RedRoomDVD opened its first pilot store in the Sydney suburb of Waterloo in 2005. Now it is in 70 locations and has an ambitious rollout schedule that aims to have kiosks in more than 1,000 locations by the end of this year.

Dean Gaylor

Age: 29

Business: Mance Design

Sector: Design

Gaylor's company, Mance Designs, focuses on architectural lighting for the residential, hospitality, commercial and government sectors. The company began when Gaylor and his business partner, Christopher Boutsinis, were asked to take over from the previous boss. Currently projecting revenue of \$8.5 million for 2008-09.

Chris O'Brien

Age: 27

Business: Hungry Giant

Sector: Waste disposal

Chris O'Brien began Hungry Giant by providing a service no one wants – waste disposal. He built a machine that compacts polystyrene foam, (which is 98% air), and with just \$300 and started working in a Chinese factory to put the gadget together. The company has since expanded, offering a full waste and recycling services. The business is currently turning over about \$700,000.

Leon Hill

Age: 25

Business: uSocial

Sector: Information Technology

Twenty-five year old Leon Hill found himself in the middle of controversy last year when he advertised that his business, uSocial, would begin selling batches of Twitter followers to clients. While pundits may be outraged the company has seemingly gone against the theme of the site, Hill isn't sorry – the business currently turns over about \$800,000.

James Griffin

Age: 25

Business: SR7

Sector: Internet

As social networking becomes a requirement for doing business in any sector, James Griffin hopes to cash in on that demand by providing reputation management services. SR7 finds where a company is being mentioned on the internet and recommends ways they can control their representation. The company intends to expand with risk advisory firm Aon in 2010.

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<http://www.smartcompany.com.au/entrepreneurs/20100427-2010-s-hot-30-under-30.html>

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