

See all 'Start-up' articles

2011's Hot 30 Under 30

Tuesday, 19 April 2011 00:00

Madeleine Heffernan, Brad Howarth and James Thomson

Page 6 of 6



Neil Singh and Candida Stephens

Company: Fidarsi Furniture

Age: 30 and 29

It took Neil Singh's online-only customer design furniture company just 16 days to turn a profit. And at last count, Singh's business, Fidarsi Furniture, was pulling in \$2.2 million in revenue after starting up in 2008.



Singh says "thinking outside the square" became the company's mantra, with customers attracted by round-the-clock support for the custom-made furniture. An escape from "pretentious sales assistants, glossy catalogues and ridiculous price tags" also helps, Singh says.

Craig Somerville

Company: Reload Media/Consulting

Age: 22

Craig Somerville became digital marketing agency Reload Media's first employee in 2008 at the age of 19, when company founder and serial entrepreneur Llew Jury took a punt on him. Three years later that early faith paid off handsomely for Jury, who made Somerville a company director, general manager and 25% owner of the company group.



That's not a bad effort, when you consider that Reload services 300 clients in Australia and around the world, with office in London, Auckland and India. Today the company employs 30 staff and revenue has grown at an annualised rate of 100% each year for the past three years to hit \$1.1 million in 2009-10.

Somerville's role now is predominantly focused on dealing with high-end clients and growing the international offices, having bought an analytical focus to Jury's vision for the company.

Zoe Warne

Company: August

Age: 30



The rapid maturing of Australia's web industry is also leading to some rapid growing up for our web entrepreneurs. For Zoe Warne and the Melbourne-based agency August that has meant a switch to strengthening relationships with partners and agencies to work collaboratively on larger projects, and becoming more specialised in certain business and technical fields.

Warne started in business at the age of 18 and with partner Daniel Banik founded August in 2005 (with Matt Agar), and now boasts a roster of clients including Fosters Group, Origin Energy and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Outside of the business Warne has been appointed as Chair of the Swinburne University Multimedia Course Advisory Committee for 2011 and is also a regular on the speaking circuit as well as a frequent commentator on all things digital for ABC774 Melbourne Radio.

Sergio Pires and Marcel Zalloua

Company: Valmont Interiors

Ages: 29 & 29



The original plan for university buddies Sergio Pires and Marcel Zalloua was to go backpacking around Europe together. So they used their university training in the building sector to find jobs in the industry while they saved up some travel funds.

It was lucky they did, as both soon realised there was a market need in the commercial fit-out space that was not being addressed.

In 2004, they founded the company Valmont on the mezzanine floor of Marcel's father's fruit factory in Sydney. In 2006 they added a design arm, enabling them to offer the entire design and construction process in-house and provide a point-of-difference in a cluttered market which has helped them win clients such as iiNet, Calibre Global and Virgin.

By 2009-10 they were turning over just under \$20 million, and are on target to break \$30 million for the current financial year. They have plans to open offices in every major city in Australia.

Farhad Meher-Homji and Rishad Sukhia

Company: Brightlabs

Ages: 30 and 30

Brightlabs founders Farhad Meher-Homji and Rishad Sukhia says sometimes two offerings are better than one.



The Brisbane-based company offers not only web design but online solutions for the high-end market. Working with businesses such as Lexus, the Cancer Council and the University of Queensland since 2004, Meher-Homji and Sukhia say investing in skilled employees – and not being afraid to hire people who might know more – has helped the company fill a niche.

Reporting revenue of \$1.8 million last year, and 38% average annual growth over the past three years, the pair looks on its way to keeping up with the fast-paced web industry.

Michael Mironowicz & Andrew Yang

Company: The Storehouse

Ages: 28 and 28

Disillusioned by his career in Australian corporate retailing, in 2009 Michael Mironowicz hooked up with high school chum Andrew Yang to find a new professional path.



Yang was already running a mid-sized web development business and online retail website, the Storehouse, but was finding it difficult to juggle both. With Mironowicz's background in retail, it was a match made in heaven.

Within two months the duo took the Storehouse's monthly revenue from \$20,000 to \$70,000, and six months later had it raking in \$140,000 per month. Now the company is on track to turn over \$1.3 million for the 2010-11 financial year.

The two are committed to exploring the latest technologies and business ideas to keep the company evolving, and are currently working on several new business models and developing a new online marketplace for emerging designers.

Joseph Glanville, Alexander Sharp and Sheng Yeo

Company: OrionVM

Ages: 19, 20 and 22



Some great ideas come about almost by accident.

For Joseph Glanville, Alexander Sharp and Sheng

Yeo, their venture into entrepreneurship started when they were teenagers with a quest to create a new kind of search engine.

They soon found that some of the cloud computing storage technology they wanted to use was unsuitable. Hence they switched to trying to solve that new problem, and realised that the solution was actually something that other people would want to buy.

The three incorporated their company OrionVM in February 2010, working out of Yeo's dorm room at the University of Technology Sydney and raising money from friends and family. A year later they have released the world's fastest storage engine for cloud computing.

Now they have a number of clients and are seeking to raise up to \$1 million as they ponder a future that's could even see them tackling cloud computing giants such as Amazon.

Justus Wilde

Company: Amblique

Age: 28



Justus Wilde started his first web business while he was still in high school. A decade later he has grown that early interest in multimedia projects into Amblique, which is now one of Australia's premier eCommerce-focused web development agencies.

He has struck a rich vein – even Gerry Harvey is coming around to eCommerce. While Harvey Norman is not yet a client, Amblique has worked with a range retailers including Supre, for whom it has helped grow its online store into the biggest of the company's 180 outlets.

Having watched many of his clients grow at a rapid pace online, Wilde now has his sights set on similar spoils, and is looking for opportunities for Amblique to get into eCommerce in its own right, while Wilde has appointed a managing director to allow him to focus on clients and sales.

Not that things have been going so bad – Amblique is on track to grow by at least 35% and posted revenue of \$2.4 million.