

REVEALED: INSIGHTS INTO SUCCESS FROM OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST

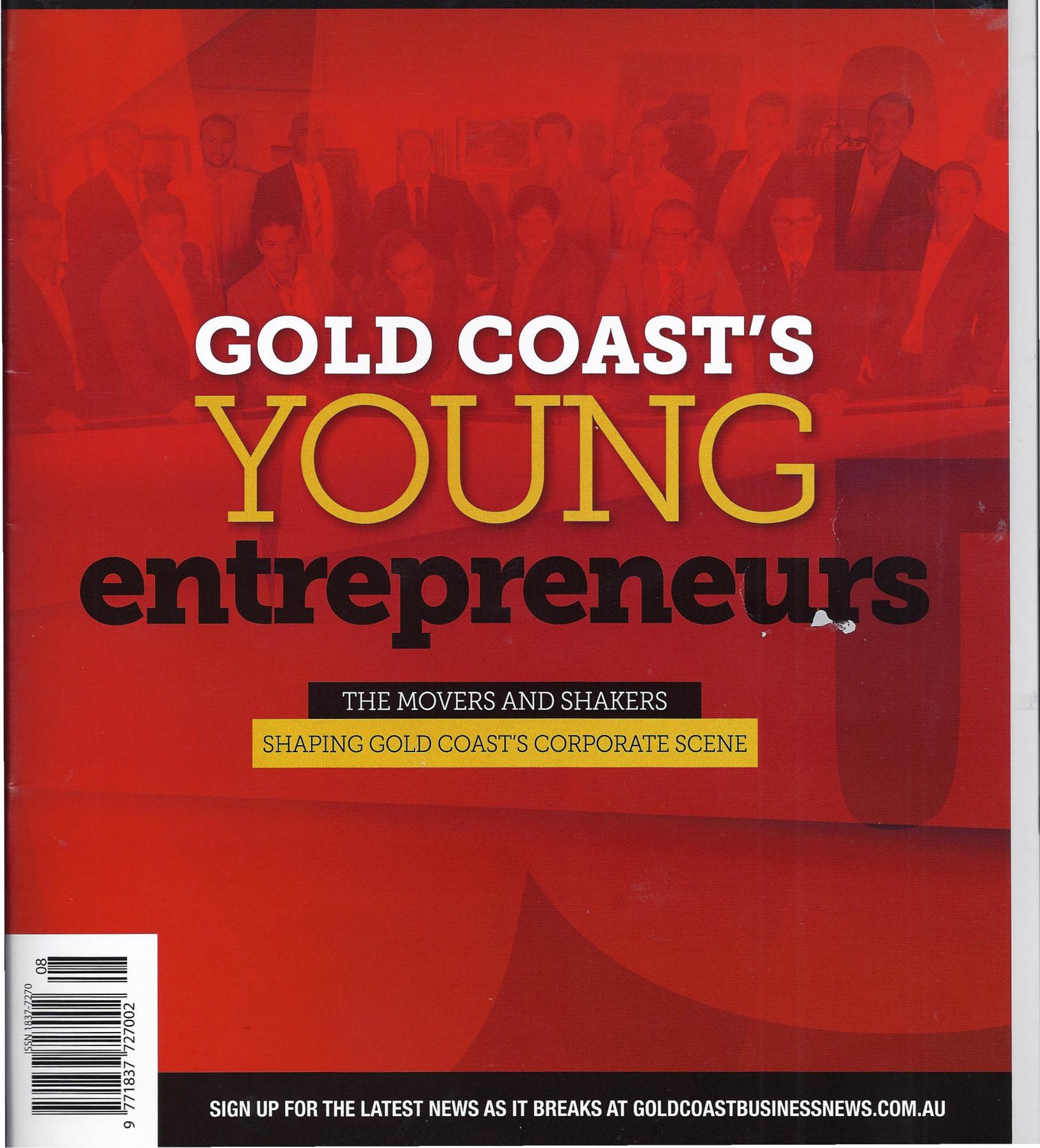
GOLD COAST

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GOLD COAST'S
YOUNG
entrepreneurs

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS

SHAPING GOLD COAST'S CORPORATE SCENE



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A PASSION FOR SUCCESS

BEST OF GOLD COAST'S BUDDING BUSINESS
TALENT AND THEIR JOURNEY SO FAR

BY NICK NICHOLS, COLIN GILMORE,
JAMES PERKINS AND LAURA DAQUINO



MEET the Gold Coast's young entrepreneurs. They are the rising stars of the city business community and all are under the age of 40.

Some have been in business for a handful of years while others are seasoned players who have forged enterprises across a range of industries

All have one thing in common - passion for their chosen fields and enthusiasm for success. These bright young business minds have achieved significant growth in their respective businesses at a time when many established concerns have faced challenges to their bottom lines.

Collectively, these young entrepreneurs have managed to increase revenue more than \$60 million over the 2012-13 financial year.

They generate more than \$240 million in annual revenue combined and they expect this to rise to more than \$350 million this financial year.

They also employ more than 700 staff, making them significant contributors to the local economy.

This year, *Gold Coast Business News* names Ron Bakir as Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

Bakir has become a significant player in the property development sector over the past nine years, forging a new path after a high-profile career as Crazy Ron in the mobile phone sector more than a decade ago.

Through his latest venture, HomeCorp Group, Bakir has developed more than 1500 residential lots across Australia since 2004 and has more than 3000 in the pipeline.

HomeCorp has generated about half a billion in revenue since inception with Bakir forecasting turnover to grow from \$106 million last financial year to about \$170 million this year.

While Bakir may have been a standout in this year's list, there is no diminishing the efforts of our runner up for a second year running, Stuart Stratton, who has built a number of substantial businesses and has been a rock solid performer.

Stratton's key operations are the Con-x-ion bus-transfer company as well as communications group Bsmart and solar retailer Green Initiatives.

Stratton is a master at building businesses and his talents are particularly acute in terms of innovation and systems. This is expected to drive growth for Stratton this year to record levels. The young entrepreneur is forecasting up to a 30 per cent increase in revenue this year and the addition of another 50 jobs to the economy.

Finally, the Trailblazer Award goes to Jason Ganis, of SmartPrint Fleet Management. Ganis is another keen innovator and is one to watch.

Of course, the same could be said of all of our finalists who each have inspiring stories to tell.

Winning the online retail game

KRISZTIAN PANCZEL

Cheap Sheds

Age: 35

Staff: 20

Revenue: \$3 million

Growth: Steady

Krisztian Panczel has written a rags-to-riches story after emigrating to Australia 10 years ago

FIVE years before founding Cheap Sheds, Krisztian Panczel and his wife Maria Molna arrived in Australia from Hungary with two backpacks and \$200 to their names.

That was in 2003, and 10 years later the pair own and operate a multimillion-dollar

business that turned over just \$250,000 in its first year.

A curious feature of the business is a game available on cheapsheds.com.au where players can stack sheds into a tower by dropping them from a swinging crane.

The online element of the business began through eBay. In 2012 Panczel established Cheap Sheds' own website and mobile app.

"By this year our annual turnover was \$3.1 million, we had 20 staff, a marketing manager, operations manager, web developers, videographers and a talented team of graphic designers.

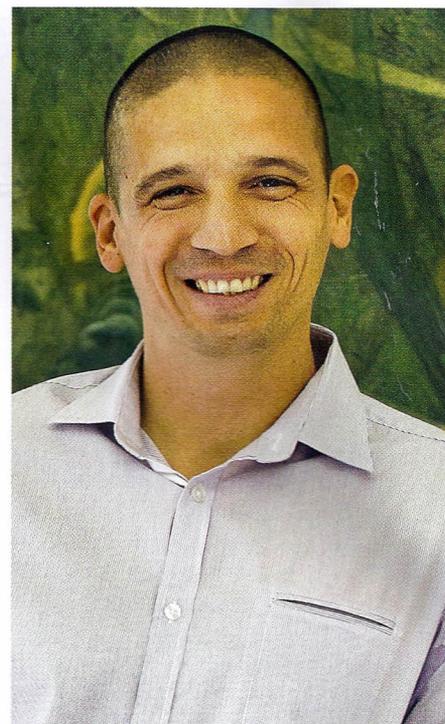
"We also have seven manufacturers, many of which are in Australia, but we also have partners in North America and Israel."

He says language barriers and a lack of in-demand skills were challenging when he first set foot in Australia.

"We thought repeatedly about starting an online business, but we weren't sure about the prospects for a pure digital business.

"What we were comfortable with and excited by was the prospect of a traditional retail business that happened to be online.

"We always embraced uncertainty from day one and never took anything for granted," says Panczel. "



Constant challenges encouraged Panczel to think creatively about the ever-changing nature of online retail, and it's paid off with Cheap Sheds forecast to grow turnover by 20 per cent this financial year.

Events from the ground up

DANIEL DE VRIES

Blue Shadow Group

Age: 38

Staff: 37

Revenue: \$3 million

Growth: 20 per cent

A DEEPENING involvement in conference and function management and growing audiovisual production interests continue to grow this entrepreneur's interests.

It makes sense that after supplying equipment to a particular industry for more than 10 years, an entrepreneur would end up transitioning into also managing operational aspects of that industry.

To Daniel de Vries and his events management business Blue Shadow Group, this means moving from supplying events to managing them "from the ground up".

The company posted turnover of \$3 million over the past financial year – up from \$2.5 million in 2011-12.

"This year we've travelled around Australia helping key clients with conferences and cocktail parties from an event management standpoint," says de Vries.

"The goal is to instill the skills I've developed into my team, so that they can manage events in their own right.

"It's all about not only supplying equipment, but supplying knowledge."

The 38-year-old says an added management income stream can be lucrative because it gives Blue Shadow more control over events so that they are not only more successful than they otherwise might have been, but also provide better financial returns.

"If the client requires more assistance, it can be more lucrative.

"But the underlying aim is to do something we love, enjoy and are good at."

De Vries was a Marriott Hotel concierge in a former life and kick-started Blue Shadow by successfully pitching to Gold Coast City Council an idea to host movies at Macintosh Park, Main Beach.

He sold his first car to buy a PA system, then ran advertisements during the movies and collected gold coin donations from viewers to fund the fledgling business.

After securing a contract to broadcast movies on the beach during Schoolies Week, he also set up an outdoor cinema at Bahrain's Lost Paradise of Dilmun water theme park in 2009.

De Vries says "like any other kid at school I started off packing shelves at Foodland".

"We've all done (things like) that and it helps with customer service skills.

"Hotels put me in good stead to understand that customers can be fickle, and you need to tune in to clients to give them what they need."

He's looking forward to 2014.

"Next year should be good; I've got a few ideas and might need new staff."

He currently has a full-time staff of 15 and 22 casuals, and expects to grow more than 10 per cent this financial year.

A key arm of the business to watch is its video production, based from Loganholme.

De Vries says that business alone is now bringing in over half a million dollars with only two staff.

"I'd say it will only get stronger as it goes on," he says. "The product we're putting out there is attracting the eye of some key people and its business is largely prompted by referral, which is fantastic."

His tips for entrepreneurs is to focus on having a strong mind and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

"As a dad with two kids, I've learned to overcome the challenges of separating the pressures of home and work life."