

## Canberra management gurus make prestigious list for the second year running

Stuart Richardson and David O'Rourke are living proof that you can be nice guys and be successful. Their company has just been named BRW Upstarts for the second year running and have plans to turn their dynamic and rapidly growing Canberra company into Australia's own multi-national Tier I management consultancy firm.

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One of the few Canberra companies to ever make the BRW Upstarts list has been named one of Australia's fastest-growing starters for the second year in a row.

Management consultancy RICHARDSON: O'ROURKE has increased its revenue by more than 100 percent for each of the five years it has been operating. The company will open a Melbourne office in June, has plans to expand into Hong Kong and Dubai within the next 18 months and into the UK, the US and all major Australian cities within five years.

Founders Stuart Richardson and David O'Rourke are youthful – Stuart was just 23 and David 31 when they went into business five years ago – inspired by the challenge to excel in an industry that has tremendous potential. David said, "Stuart and I are like-minded and have the passion to achieve our goals. We knew from the early days that together we stood a good chance of getting other like-minded passionate people to work for us."

The company has put a lot of effort into defining its "ideal employee". This employee also has an impressive array of attributes but the partners point out that skills are not paramount.

"We don't hire people purely for skills," Stuart said. "We hire people for their attitude, creativity, cultural fit and growth potential and then we invest time and money into their development as professionals."

One of these attributes is having a good work/life balance, a phrase that has become a platitude in many boardrooms. "We actively manage work/life

balance," Stuart said. "The challenge is for David and I to set the example here."

"We're a people company," Stuart said. "Our people own and share our vision. They all have the ability to think up new ideas, are interested in our exciting growth journey and demonstrated ability to directly contribute to the success of the company."

The company's vision is, formally, "to be Australia's own Tier 1 management consultancy". It aims to be synonymous with quality and have a strong brand awareness that will, in turn, attract more star recruits. "It's a fun place to work and we are able to measure this through our excellent record of employee retention," David said.

Stuart and David might be nice guys, but they have no shortage of ambition. They planned to go global from the beginning.

"We're being very ambitious but measured in our approach," David said. "Our planning is very deliberate, it involves all our team and importantly we have achieved every milestone we have ever set ourselves."

The company's international rate of growth is expected to outstrip its Australian growth shortly. Executive Director Stuart Richardson said, "Australia is only between 2 and 3 percent of the world economy. But, you only get one chance. If you fail in business here you get thrown on the scrap heap. The lessons we've learnt in Australia will help to guide our international expansion."

The decision to open their first satellite office in St Kilda, Melbourne, is an example of the lateral but deliberate thinking that RICHARDSON:



"Richardson:O'Rourke's team share a vision for the future"

O'ROURKE is quickly gaining a reputation for. "It was a logical extension," Stuart explained. "The culture of our business is more aligned to Melbourne than, say, Sydney. Melbourne has a strong sense of community and is more relationship-based. It's much like Canberra in many ways."

Stuart and David worked from home offices for their first two years. They moved to their Manuka office and hired their first staff member in their third year of business. The company now employs 24 exceptional staff members, has recently outgrown its Manuka office and is about to relocate to Braddon to an office that is four times as large.

Quality is a cornerstone of their success. "Our larger competitors do have some good people but we just saw an opportunity to do things better," Stuart said.

RICHARDSON:O'ROURKE began providing project management expertise to the market and over time, in line with their business plan, branched into associated specialities. This is in contrast to some of their multi-national competitors who began as accountants and branched into the high-growth area of management consultancy.

Stuart and David are both engineers. Stuart is ex-air force, an aeronautical engineer who has a master of management but has worked all his professional life as a project manager and consultant supporting business change. David spent 11 years in the army as an engineering officer, has a bachelor of computer science, a master of business and technology, and credits the support his wife provides for much of his success.

Stuart is creative, enthusiastic, a lateral thinker and is primarily responsible for developing the company's strategy and move into new markets. David is operationally focussed and ensures the company's strategy is delivered on a day-to-day basis. Both are effective managers and well supported by their vibrant staff. They also lay claim to being pragmatic and able to compromise.

The partners were among 22 entrepreneurs selected in 2005 for an AusIndustry-funded and Australian Information Industry Association sponsored leadership program run by the Macquarie Graduate School of Management. The program provided them with world-class mentoring and the business skills to scale "from a million to a billion".

The company has worked for almost every large federal government departments and for numerous commercial clients on organisational change and technology projects involving from 10 to 100,000 people. Significantly, about 75 per cent of its jobs are repeat business.

The company has worked hard to develop a profile of its "ideal client" and actively seeks clients that share their vision and drive. RICHARDSON: O'ROURKE spends a lot of time getting to know its clients so it can tailor solutions to the organisation, implement effective mentoring and skills-transfer systems, avoid duplication, save its client's time and money and, ultimately, enhance workplace cultures over time.

"Fundamentally we solve our clients' business challenges through a blend of experience and innovation and equip them with the skills to ensure these solutions endure," David said.

### RICHARDSON:O'ROURKE

undertakes work ranging from helping a NASDAQ 100-listed company on its entry and growth in the Federal Government market and specifically developing business and communication strategies to support that, to working with Australia's largest engineering consultancy to provide specialist advice on a complex \$100M building re-development project in Watsonia, Melbourne.

### RICHARDSON:O'ROURKE

specialises in project and program management, strategy and business improvement, enterprise technology and marketing and communications and is always looking for dynamic professionals to join their team.

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