

A pair of ambitious Canberra consultants proud to be dubbed 'upstarts'



A DIVISERS: Stewart Richardson, at left, and David O'Rourke at their Griffith office.

By John Thistleton

A Canberra management consultancy aiming to grow from a million dollar operation to a billion dollar one has made the *Business Review Weekly's* Upstart 2006 list.

And if Richardson O'Rourke does not become Australia's No 1 management consultancy soon, it won't be for lack of ambition.

BRW's Upstart companies establish a fast-growth trajectory and raise the performance bar in their industry. They are highly innovative companies aiming to be leaders in their fields.

But Richardson and O'Rourke is not rushing.

The company's founders are working on getting their strategy right first.

Director and principal consultant

WHO QUALIFIES?

BRW's Upstart 2006 criteria:

- Begin trade after January 1, 2000
- Report at least two years' revenue
- Have had at least \$500,000 revenue in 2003-04
- Have more than one main customer

Stewart Richardson said an early hurdle was not to grow too quickly, but to set down a solid foundation and robust business plan.

Beginning as a two-person operation in 2003, the company, which specialises in project and program management, has grown to 15 full-time staff and opened its Griffith office in September 2005. They also provide business management,

integrated marketing communications and enterprise information communications technology.

At 27, Mr Richardson might seem in a hurry, but it is not the case. He met his business partner, David O'Rourke, when they were in separate consulting roles to assemble information communication technology infrastructure for the Department of Defence.

Ambitious and like-minded, they're aiming at becoming a national and multinational management consultancy, and in the short term have turned down offers from other companies to buy their business or join them.

Mr O'Rourke, 35, said companies on BRW's Upstart 50 list might be dead in 12 months' time, but making the list was a step on Richardson

O'Rourke's journey of strong, sustainable growth to become an international management consulting firm. They would continue re-investing in their business and aiming to be Australia's equivalent to the management consultancy world leader McKinsey and Co.

The partners are among 22 entrepreneurs Australia-wide to be selected for the AusIndustry and ACT Government-sponsored Entrepreneurs program, which will give them a compressed Master of Business Administration over 12 months and high-quality mentoring.

The program's aim is best summed up in its slogan, "From a million to a billion", that is, taking companies like Richardson O'Rourke from a million-dollar operation to a billion-dollar one.