

FROM STRENGTH TO SUCCESS

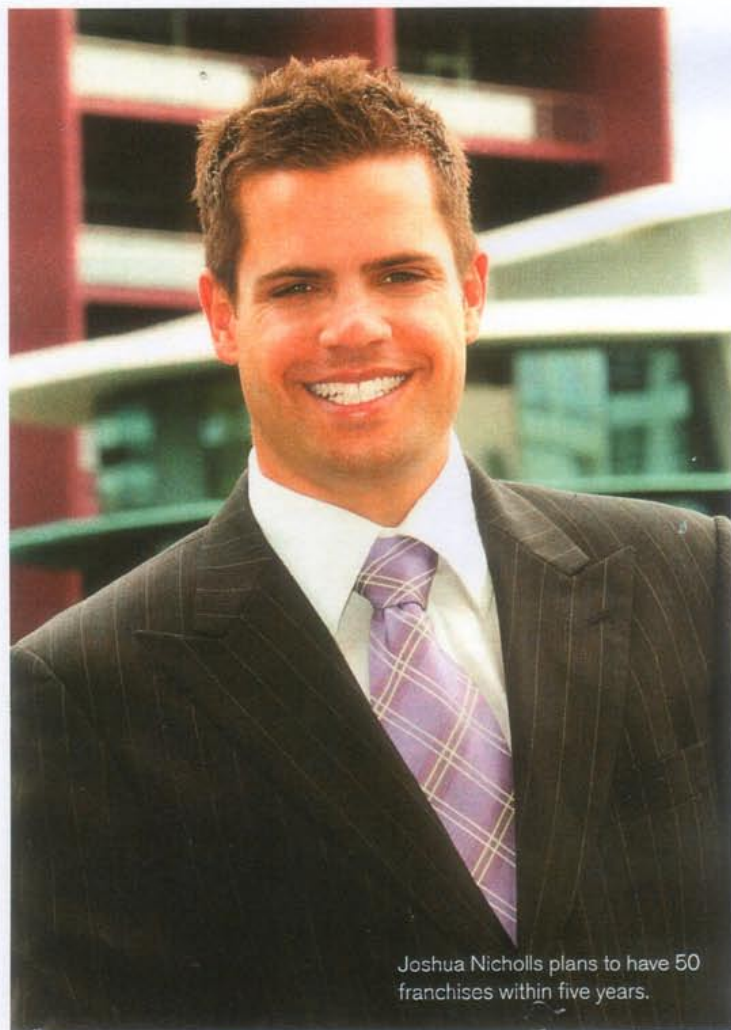
From its humble beginnings, *Platinum Electrical* has now grown to have 30 staff and was named the *Australia Post NSW & ACT Small Business of the Year*. Earlier this year, 27 year old Joshua Nicholls, launched the franchising arm of *Platinum Electrical* with plans to have 50 franchises within five years. Nicholls has big plans for the future.

WCM: What gave you the motivation to start your own business at 22-years-old?

Joshua Nicholls: Watching the lifestyle of my previous employer was my first motivation for starting a business. As a tradesman, I would walk into the office at 7:30am to receive my job schedule for the day. The Managing Director would stroll into the office at 8am, say "hi" to all the guys, make his breakfast at a leisurely pace, and then go upstairs to his office for the day. Also because I started at such a young age I didn't have a lot to lose. I had no mortgage, no wife or family and no overheads, therefore starting business for me was somewhat low-risk and the decision was relatively easy to make.

WCM: You started as a one-man business, what steps did you take to expand?

JN: I lead my business based on the principle of 'make the space and you will fill it'. Small business owners are often too scared to put on a new staff member, buy a new van or purchase a new premises, because they are worried they won't have enough business to fill it. I often employ new electricians and purchase a new van when I only have a 50 per cent workload for them. However, if I didn't take that step, I would not have had the space to create new customers. There is nothing that motivates me more to attract new business than having a van sitting at the office not earning money!



Joshua Nicholls plans to have 50 franchises within five years.

WCM: You said that you want to challenge the industry stereotype of 'slack and unreliable' tradesmen. How are you doing this?

JN: Everything about *Platinum Electrical* is professional and portrays

a spirit of excellence. Our corporate identity is strong, with uniformed staff, sign-written vehicles, and consistent branding on our stationery, marketing collateral and website. Our staff are always on time and we ensure this is the case through a web-based tracking system.

WCM: After four years, your business grew by 790 per cent. How did you grow so fast and did this present any major challenges for your business?

JN: *Platinum Electrical* grew so fast because I was young and ambitious and wasn't afraid to take risks. I also spend a lot of money on advice and it is really important not to be 'tight' when it comes to this. A lot of small business owners try to cut corners by saving money when it comes to professionals in the legal, accounting and business fields but this can be a fatal mistake.

WCM: What is the motivation behind your goal to become one of the most technologically-advanced electrical contracting companies in Australia?

JN: One of the main reasons why is because I love technology. Since a young age I've always loved the latest and greatest gadgets and like to be the first one to have whatever hits the market. From a business perspective, staying at the forefront of technology is important because it is definitely the way of the future. Being the most technologically-advanced electrical company will give us a competitive edge and can provide a great unique selling point.

WCM: Being a young person, do you find it hard to take on staff and then lead people twice your age?

JN: No, not really. I thoroughly enjoy leading my staff and over the years I have found that I have a natural gift for it. I really enjoy seeing my staff grow and develop and I do everything I can to help them reach their goals in life. I definitely do not try to be someone I'm not, and because my staff see that my heart is in that I think they enjoy working under my leadership.

WCM: Do you have any tips to motivate staff and help them remain enthusiastic on an ongoing basis?

JN:

- Create a great team culture – Creating a solid team environment and then making your staff feel part of the team is really important. A team environment promotes a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a business and that is one of the driving factors that keeps people motivated.
- Give them ownership and encourage risk-taking – I am big on delegation and give a lot of ownership to my team. By giving them ownership they feel a part of something that is bigger than them and can experience the feeling of success as the company flourishes.
- Provide performance related incentives – Everyone likes being noticed and rewarded for their hard work, so performance-related

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incentives also motivate staff. However, it is very important that this is not the only strategy used for motivating staff.

- Let them know that they're not just a number – Whenever I get a chance to have a personal conversation with my staff members I do. It's really important that they see I am genuinely interested in them.
- Always communicate the vision – I make sure that I am always instilling the vision of *Platinum Electrical* because when the future is bright and there are extremely ambitious goals in place, my staff are excited about what's in store and that also keep them highly motivated.

WCM: Recently you took a five week holiday from your business. Was this a difficult thing to do and were things a mess when you got back?

JN: No and no! Our five week holiday was a reward for my wife and myself for the last five years of hard work, since starting *Platinum Electrical*. Developing a company that works without you takes a lot of hard work (and many sacrifices), however, that hard work definitely pays off when you can leave the business for five weeks and it runs perfectly.

WCM: What is the vision for your business? What do you want it to look like in five or even ten years time?

JN: In five years, *Platinum Electrical* should be in its fifth year of franchising and our very achievable projections for growth indicate we will have 50 franchisees with approximately 150 vans on the road. In comparison to our last five years of business (which has been developed around the conventional way of doing the trades business), growth for the next five years will increase by almost 1,200 per cent. During this time, I anticipate that *Platinum Electrical* will have expanded to other Australian states and territories, with our existing business continually growing and providing a good steady model for franchisees to replicate from. **wcm**

You can read more about Joshua Nicholls in *Secrets of Small Business Owners Exposed!* Copies are available now in all good bookshops.