



Build Your Own Business

Have it your way

A mobile franchise goes a long way towards mastering the work-life balance, writes **Keeli Cambourne**.

JON and Sharon Carter knew how demanding a small business could be. They had owned a convenience store in Bundaberg and the long hours meant time with their four young children was suffering.

They decided to find a business that could give them not only financial stability but also let them work close to home.

"We found the Jumping J-Jays franchise and its low output appealed to us straight away," Jon says. "The mobile franchise set-up meant we could work from home and it was fairly flexible. It was perfect for a husband-and-wife team and gave us the chance to get that lifestyle-work balance right."

Last September the Carters moved to Plumpton in Sydney's west and took their franchise with them, also taking on a bigger role in the main franchise operations.

"Sydney had a bigger area and a bigger opportunity for us and we are now working for J-Jays full-time," Jon says.

There has been substantial growth in the uptake of mobile franchises in the past 12 months, particularly in the service sector, says the executive director of the Franchise Council of Australia, Steve Wright.

"We had anticipated a slowdown but that has not happened," Wright says. "In the past decade, franchising has actually outstripped business growth with an 8 per cent year-on-year growth, which we are optimistic will continue throughout 2009-10.

"The benefit of a mobile franchise is not just that they are accessible in terms of financial outlay but they also usually don't require a lot of specialised skills.

"They are usually based on the classic franchising model like Jim's Mowing. People buy the brand and there is a lot of back-of-house support so franchisees can just concentrate on doing the job."

The managing director of Franchise Careers and the Victorian branch president of the Franchise Council, Dean Salomone, says the range of categories in mobile franchises has added to their appeal – everything from coffee supplies to dog washing, car cleaning and party equipment hire.

"If these mobile franchises are run correctly, they can be a good husband-and-wife type of operation," Salomone says.

"And they are usually at a comfortable price

point in terms of entry into business ownership. There are no excessive outlays and basically the franchisor looks after the business side of things – booking appointments, invoicing – and provides an opportunity for the franchisee not to have to worry about the development side of things.

"There is usually a reasonable amount of support services but that can come at a cost. Generally, though, if you're not a good salesperson but like structure in a business, a mobile franchise is ideal."

Service-based mobile franchises are the shining light in the sector, Wright says. "People are now more conscious about wanting to spend their time in the best way they can and rather than doing what other generations have done in the past – like cleaning the house, washing the dog and mowing the lawn – today's generations are making value judgments about what their time is worth and pay people for services that may have once been seen as non-essential."

But not all mobile franchises deal with making our lives easier. Some require a certain level of expertise.

All Stripped, Australia's only tile-removal and floor-stripping franchise, started in 1995. The number of franchises is growing quickly, according to state manager, Queensland, Gary Prater, due mainly to the mobile franchise system the company has in place.

"There are two big advantages for buying into a mobile franchise [such as]: less capital outlay and you can operate from home," Prater says.

"The mobile model means franchisees have reduced overheads, start-up and operating costs and it often results in a better lifestyle. If business is a little quiet you can be at home, whereas if you had a retail franchise you'd still have to be in the shop or office.

"And people can't really afford those sorts of big investments at the moment. We are getting more inquiries for All Stripped franchises from people with all sorts of backgrounds, especially from those who were working in mining.

"People are cashed up and looking at ways to get into their own business and a mobile franchise offers them that opportunity."



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Good work ... Sharon and Jon Carter, owners of a Jumping J-Jays franchise. Photo: Fiona Morris