

# Spark of inspiration pays off

Husband and wife team find out how to be everywhere at once as business takes off



Ainslie and Sarah Allen: Franchise model has been a booming success

If your business grows too quickly, you can end up spending too much time on training and not enough on your core business.

ELECTRICIAN Ainslie Allen had a grand plan to grow his business, but soon realised he couldn't be everywhere at once. The gloss of expanding interstate quickly wore off when the Victorian was met with the cost of flights and accommodation.

What resulted was a franchise model that has seen his business, Appliance Tagging Services, boom.

The business, which certifies the electrical safety of items to meet Australian standards in workplaces, was named Emerging Franchisor of the Year at the Excellence in Franchising Awards last month.

Ainslie and his wife Sarah, who launched the franchise model in late 2006, now have 36 franchisees spread across every state and territory in Australia. They say franchising was a way for them to be in many places at once, while maintaining the same level of service. "We have a lot of

national clients, and they want to know they can get the same level of service in Bathurst as they can in Alice Springs or Sydney," Sarah says.

"We were spending a lot of money on flights and accommodation to get around, otherwise, we were contracting the work out and not getting the same level of service."

While growth has been rapid over recent years, the couple took their time getting the business off the ground, spending almost two years working with consultants and franchise-specific lawyers to perfect their business plan.

They then limited themselves to just one franchisee for the first eight months, using it as an opportunity to iron out any teething problems before they had the chance to multiply.

"It can be very tempting just to run with it, but we've always tried to come back to basics and evaluate whether or not we're doing the right thing," Sarah

says. "If your business grows too quickly, you can end up spending too much time on training and not enough on your core business. You have to make sure you do it right."

"If you think that in six months time, you'll look back on the decisions you've made, and will not be happy with them, or will have to make excuses, you shouldn't do it in the first place."

In addition, Sarah says close support from the franchisor is essential to a successful business model, regardless of the product or service being provided.

"You need to have a very clear-cut system and good communication," she says.

"It's easy to expect people to think the way (franchisors) think, but it comes down to training and managing expectations. We speak to our franchisees every single day. It gives us a good feeling of how they're going and the challenges they're facing."

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