

40,000 small businesses on the Gold Coast: What's your story?

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Your Business



Got a small business success story?
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System for efficiency

A GOLD Coast company has launched a product it says will dramatically improve the performance of small and medium businesses – through systems.

The company, iSystemize International, has released a package of DVD tutorials and electronic equipment that allows business owners to create their own instruction manuals on video.

"Every business has systems, whether they know it or not," says iSystemize co-founder Dale Mercer (pictured). "These are procedures that staff repeat every day that make the business work. These can be anything from assembling parts to packing product or answering sales inquiries."

"Yet most businesses struggle to train their staff in these procedures because they don't have them documented, and few people these days have the time or inclination to wade through a procedures manual."

Mr Mercer, an IT specialist and business coach, said the result was that business owners and staff spent large amounts of unproductive time in training, or worse, in making and repeating mistakes.

He said iSystemize allowed a business owner or manager to record on camera "the correct way to do every repeatable action in their business".

"Then it's just a matter of loading that video into the iSystemize computer software and you have an easy way for people to learn."

Mr Mercer said each video was only about five minutes long.

"People respond much better to being shown how to do something than trying to read how to do it," he said.

"Think of the most successful restaurant business in the world – McDonald's. It is a multibillion-dollar worldwide business that is essentially run by teenagers. How can they do it? Everything in a McDonald's restaurant is a repeatable procedure or system, easily learned by the newest recruit."

Mr Mercer said iSystemize was available through the company's consultants around Australia. The consultants provide the product and support where necessary.



Lighting the way



Rod Cramp of Emerlite Electrical Services at Southport with his LED lighting display van

Photo: MIKE BATTERHAM

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VETERAN Gold Coast sparkie Rod Cramp is branching out with the latest technology in a move that extends his business nationally.

Mr Cramp's Emerlite Electrical Services, which has been servicing highrise apartments on the Coast for more than 30 years, has teamed up with Brisbane-based LED Lighting (Aust) to push into new markets focusing on low-emission, power-saving LED technology.

The joint venture is literally on the road and beating a path to customers as far away as Perth with the launch of a new mobile showroom, one of a number planned to service a growing market.

The van is equipped with power meters to show customers power savings and the LED output of lights.

It is understood to be the first business to offer a mobile showroom for LED lighting products which cut down on power bills.

"It's much better than someone coming up with a briefcase and computer," said Mr Cramp, who services about 200 apartment buildings across the Coast.

"People have been asking us for a long time about reducing their electricity bills."

"This way we can demonstrate the benefits of the LED lights."

Highrise buildings use most of their electricity in underground carparks and corridors, where light-

ing is switched on 24 hours a day in most cases.

LED lights, which were developed in the 1940s, and for decades were used solely as indicator lights, have been known to reduce lighting bills by up to 80 per cent.

"The only thing that puts some people off is the initial cost," Mr Cramp said.

Emerlite offers a three-year guarantee on its lights, well above the two-year payback period the LED lights are said to offer.

But Mr Cramp said quality LEDs left on 24 hours a day should last between six and 10 years.

"There's a lot of rubbish out there that's not going to last the distance," he said.

Emerlite and LED Lighting

(Aust) undertake extensive independent testing on new products and the partners have just introduced their own LED to replace circular fluorescent lights, commonly known as oyster lights.

"We've developed it here and get it made in Malaysia," Mr Cramp said.

While LED sales currently make up only a small percentage of Emerlite's business, he saw significant growth potential.

"I see this as an enormous market," he said.

The Emerlite-LED Lighting (Aust) alliance has extended its reach nationally with contracts in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and the Sunshine Coast, as well as several Gold Coast highrises.

Equity broker urges small firms to add a 'third dimension'

A GOOD business offers more than just cash in the register, according to a Gold Coast equity specialist.

"Many business owners haven't realised there has always been another form of currency or 'legal tender' sitting right under their noses," said Tony Puls, managing director of Gold Coast-based Business Equity Brokers.

"Owners of small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) may not be aware that it's possible to create a more meaningful and useful share capital structure to underpin their business enterprise than they may currently have."

"Technically, capital is stored

value and entrepreneurs are discovering that, given the right share capital structure, good ideas, future profits, future contracts and even future growth can be converted into cash, goods or services.

"This opens up opportunities for co-operative ownership of strong, well-established businesses."

"No longer is it necessary to sell the entire business outright."

"Instead, owners of small to medium-sized enterprises can now sell down some of the equity they own in the SME."

Mr Puls said the Gold Coast-based Australian Small Scale Offerings Board allowed SMEs to do this



Managing director of Business Equity Brokers Tony Puls

through a restricted "secondary sales system".

"This allows shareholders of your business to advertise their shares for resale through an accredited ASSOB sponsor."

Mr Puls said Business Equity Brokers, which is an ASSOB sponsor, had been fielding strong interest

from business owners seeking to establish a business equity account.

"Clients have said this is better than trade dollars," he said. "ASSOB is not just about raising capital."

He said an equity account added a "third dimension" to a business.

"Being listed on ASSOB allows you to better utilise your share capital at a time when banks have virtually stopped lending to business."

He said once listed, a business's share capital could work in a number of ways for small businesses, including:

- Providing an exit for the founders to cash out;
- Providing an exit for investors;

- Helping facilitate a management buyout;
- Developing a great "succession plan";
- Rewarding key staff through an employee share ownership participation plan;
- Making your business more attractive for a trade sale;
- Once listed you can raise extra working capital if required;
- Use shares as a bid currency to grow by merger or acquisition;
- Gain greater shareholder spread.

"Each share sale provides an indicative overall capitalised value of your business," he said.