

Winner – Service Central

www.servicecentral.com.au

Danial Ahchow is the driving force behind Service Central, a fast growing portal that connects domestic and commercial customers online with service providers.

Currently operating in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Geelong, the company's customers simply log on to provide details of a job that needs doing and can expect to receive a response by SMS or email. Customers pay nothing for the service, while service providers pay a subscription and a job fee.

Explaining the concept, Ahchow says Service Central turns around the notion that tradespeople are unreliable by getting them to respond to customer needs. Creating the job matching software was critical.

"Being first to market with our unique matchmaking technology that matches consumers with the right tradespeople for their requirements has been an inspiration for us at Service Central," Ahchow said.

The company's technology won it the Hewlett Packard Award for Best E-Business for 2008.

"Recent major strategic alliances with Home Hardware and Master Electricians have seen the speed of growth increase even further as our unique technology, our can do attitude and our dedication to quality are recognised by others," Ahchow said.

In three years of operations Service Central has had listed 80,000 jobs which in turn have generated more than \$200 million in work for the 2600 service providers. Whether it's a requirement for building to plumbing to legal to financial services, more than 3000 jobs are posted daily.

"The 100,000th job request listed with Service Central was a major company highlight for us. Launching a brand new concept that revolutionises the way people find tradespeople and services has been a massive challenge, and reaching the point where over 100,000 consumers had used our unique technology brought the realisation that we had built something solid that people really love."

Now there are 100 staff and the business now lists more than 130,000 job requests representing over \$350 million worth of work. And it's yet another of those ventures that started out in the family living room, and took some time to get started let alone gain traction.

"Launching the business back in 2005 was far from easy. I had to personally call 600 plumbers before one would meet with me. Every single plumber was apparently 'too busy', but when I met with this first plumber he sat and listened to me for four hours before letting me know he wasn't interested. It took another three weeks to find the first plumber to join Service Central. That first plumber has now been

offered over 4500 jobs and accepted 715 of them," said Ahchow.

Expansion is underway in the Gold Coast, Adelaide, Newcastle and other parts of NSW.

"The last three years of building growing and managing our network of 3500+ tradespeople has taught Service Central a lot about the key aspects of managing a network of independent contractors.

"In particular, we are helping systemise and automate the management of networks of contractors for manufacturers, retailers, property managers, real estate agents, and facility managers. We see this as truly revolutionary as the efficiencies that we have been able to generate within our business over the last three years will now be applied throughout each sector of Australian industry."

Grant Cleary, Hewlett Packard Australia's Marketing Director, Personal Systems Group congratulated Service Central, the winner of the 2008 HP Award for Best E-business, saying this award recognises online businesses that have demonstrated significant growth and show innovation in their use of technology and the online business environment.

"HP judges were impressed with Service Central's innovative approach to an established market through the development of unique software designed to connect domestic and commercial customers with registered, qualified and insured service providers. The confidence in and commitment to this new business model resulted in substantial profit growth in the 07/08 financial year.

"The award submission clearly outlined Service Central's use of technology to change existing means of doing business and ultimately provide a better solution for consumers. HP received a number of extremely high calibre submissions and congratulates all entrants and finalists in this year's awards."

*Bruce Ahchow, Chief Executive Officer, Service Central and
Danial Ahchow, Executive Director, Service Central*

