

Some see the future in empty teacups; Mick and Sally Sanders saw theirs in a glass of yoghurt. It was 2005 when a trip to Paris, and the city's quality French yoghurt, served up the inspiration and business opportunity they'd been looking for. Within a year they were producing their own version of premium-quality yoghurt back in their home town of Adelaide.

MOO is a stirred yoghurt with a thick and creamy texture. Filled with the goodness of fresh Australian milk and carefully crafted with the finest ingredients, the MOO range of Premium and Greek-Style yoghurts brought something new to the table for Australian consumers.

The next step was to sell it, which the Sanders managed to do by building a chain of yoghurt stands around Adelaide shopping centres, peaking at eight outlets. It worked. But as many emerging enterprises discover, there comes a time when you have to decide what your core business really is.

Mick and Sally decided that their passion lay in producing the best product they could. They moved away from retail to concentrate on distribution through supermarkets and independent retailers in South Australia. It was the right business model for MOO, and sales built to a healthy 500,000 tubs a year.



The next step was to make MOO a truly national brand. Backed by careful market research they redefined their product, and developed a new range of gourmet flavours like Banana Caramel Sundae and Blood Orange and Passion Compote. Finally, in April this year, they reached an agreement with Coles Supermarkets to supply product nationally.

Now MOO would need to up production from 500,000 to 8 million units per annum, with only three months to make it happen. The next step was more of a giant leap.

The 5-strong Board, all shareholders, set to work arranging the necessary funding, including a massive expansion of working capital to cope with the initial lag in cash flow. The neighbouring premises were leased for a new coolroom and packing room. New machinery was sourced, supply contracts negotiated and staff appointed to grow the MOO team to 25.

Finding a few free minutes for an interview with Mick was a miracle in itself, with the first Coles delivery due on 8 July. But daunting as it all seemed Mick had no doubt that everything was under control.

So what does Mick Sanders see as the secret to MOO's success?

The first answer is attention to detail, particularly when it comes to customers. Thoroughly understanding their needs, responding promptly and above all treating them with total respect. As Mick says, "Our customers are our business!"

The second was about business culture. Ensuring everyone in the team knows their job, has the opportunity to grow with the business and feels a sense of ownership in the journey. "It's a bit of a cliché," says Mick, "but you need to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are."

Yet for all the challenges on his plate, Mick Sanders wouldn't miss his monthly meeting with his CEO Syndicate.

"I always come away with something. Although we're all in different fields the challenges and hurdles are the same. They're a support group and a sounding board. We can talk at a level I just can't do with anyone else." - Mick Sanders, Moo Premium Foods



Sally & Mick Sanders
Moo Premium Foods