

CASE STUDY

JAMES MILLER & LUKE BAYLIS
WWW.SUMOSALAD.COM

THE BUSINESS: Noticing the growing trend to healthy eating, James & Luke set up SumoSalad – selling fresh salads, rolls and wraps. Starting with one store in 2003 there are now more than 60 outlets. The pair is still heavily involved. Luke handles the business side, such as the franchising system, expansion, marketing, etc. James looks more after operations such as store design, franchisee training system and menu items.

Q James and Luke, tell us a little bit about your business and what you do

A To put it simply, SumoSalad is an Australian healthy fast food brand that serves a range of affordable, nutritious and delicious food items such as made to order fresh salads, pasta, rolls, wraps and more. There are more than 60 outlets across Australia, in addition to stores in Dubai, the UK and soon New Zealand, with other overseas markets to follow.

While essentially a great food offering, we like to think of SumoSalad more as an easy solution for people to help improve their diets and overall wellbeing.

Q How much did it cost roughly to set up and how did you finance it?

A It cost about \$120,000 to open our first store, funded through our life savings and help from family and friends. To turn the franchising opportunity into a reality we had to raise around \$1.7 million which took a lot of hard work knocking on doors and eventually came through, thanks to a private investor.

Q How did you get customers to come to you?

A In the beginning we were literally inside a sumo suit on the street, telling people to come and check out our new store. Once people tried the menu once, they came back again and again.

Going forward, as we didn't have large marketing budgets to allow us to implement large advertising campaigns, we resorted to clever marketing tactics that were creative and most importantly inexpensive. Examples include the SumoSalad healthy protest conducted at the launch of

a well-known doughnut store. We found consumers responded really well to it, especially as we are an Australian brand. We continue to approach our marketing in this manner.

Q The best advice you've ever received?

A Our business mentor Steve Pongrass has been an invaluable source of help to us in taking the concept of SumoSalad to a successful franchise enterprise. One piece of great advice he gave us was to build a business culture around individual and team performance, which is something we've striven to do and seen the benefits.

Q What was your biggest obstacle and how did you overcome it?

A Raising capital was a massive one. In the early days no one apart from our family and friends believed in our concept for SumoSalad, and being quite young it was hard for people to take us seriously. A lot of hard work from our end and financial help from private investors finally enabled us to overcome this challenge. Once the first store had proved itself a huge success, it became easier for more people to buy into our idea.

Q Is there anything you'd do differently?

A When first starting SumoSalad we made the mistake of hiring a lot of friends to help us out in the business, when we should have been focused on getting the right professional team in place from the start. This is probably something we would do differently if we were to do it over again, which would save a lot of time and money.

Q What are your three tips for success?

A **1.** Don't give up on your idea – if you believe in your business concept, don't let your inexperience or non-believers tell you otherwise. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it
2. Plan, plan, plan – being prepared is the easiest way to ensure you make as few mistakes as possible, some of which could be costly, and a solid business plan will help put you on the path to success. A business mentor or seeking advice will also help you to plan effectively
3. Put in the hours – be prepared to work hard, especially in the beginning stages. Your business isn't going to be a success overnight and no one will ever work as hard as you are prepared to do.



Luke Baylis (left) and James Miller:
"Don't give up – if it was easy everyone would be doing it."