

Entrepreneur Watch Out on top

The market has been shocked by news JB Hi-Fi's chief Richard Uechtritz will retire, but his performance has been very impressive over a decade.



SumoSalad

Tuesday, 03 March 2009 19:45
James Thomson

Smart50 rank: 7
Revenue: \$29.78 million
Growth: 99.51%
Founders: Luke Baylis, 31; James Miller, 33
Based: New South Wales
Employees: 23
Industry: Retail trade
Website: www.sumosalad.com



When living in the US, SumoSalad founders James Miller (right of picture) and Luke Baylis were exposed to a society filled with endless supplies of junk food, obesity and unhealthy living. They realised it was not much better in Australia.

So in 2003 they created a new concept of healthy, delicious fast-food, designed to help improve people's diets, including their own, and promote overall health and wellbeing.

The idea was primarily to offer fresh "design your own" made-to-order healthy salads that were nutritious, satisfying, delicious and convenient. The name they chose was SumoSalad, to reflect their large and filling salads.

The company now has 62 franchises. Revenue has increased to \$29.7 million from \$14.2 million. Baylis admits the most challenging part of starting up the business was running a franchise system dealing with many different individuals.

Earlier this year, he bought the master franchise for Victoria back. "The master franchisee wasn't proactively growing the business. There were issues with consistency with the other states. It cost us several hundred thousand dollars," he says.

"But we decided to invest and give it a big push."

The company has used viral advertising very effectively. Last year, they launched a viral marketing campaign with a web video featuring a fat boy trying unsuccessfully to escape from the body of a thin man. See it [here](#).

It was a dig at the McDonald's "inner-child" campaign and an attempt to position SumoSalad as a healthier alternative to McDonald's. The campaign cost \$20,000 and took less than a month to get together, but the response was huge with an estimated 150,000 viewing the video.

In 2007, the first overseas store opened in Dubai. SumoSalad also now operates in Britain, with New Zealand soon to open in October. "Our goal is to build the business to several hundreds of stores in Australia and become a major domestic and global brand," he says.

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