

LUCY MEDIA

In just five years Lucy Media has grown from a seedling idea of Alex Mair's to become one of the top 500 websites in the US. Not bad for a small firm operating out of Canberra!

Like all good ideas, it was a simple one. It came to him at a dinner party with friends where they were discussing the six degrees of separation concept and how it applied to dating. Shortly after this, he found himself at a Wassily Kandinsky exhibition at the Tate Modern, where, surrounded by such inspiration, the celebrity idea took hold.

Alex was convinced that marrying the features of social networking with web-based content collaboration would provide new opportunities for devotees of popular culture to share information.

So in August 2006, whilst sitting under the infamous London Eye, Alex sketched out a visual plan for his first website. Two weeks later www.whosdatedwho.com was born.

"From that first website the idea grew to become what is now a media and entertainment platform made up of a portfolio of websites, catering for the entertainment and leisure industries – which we call the Lucy Media network" Alex explained.

"Our websites are "social editorial communities" - places on the internet where people create and share content around "passion topics",

including famous people, movies, TV shows and sports."

The company has gone from strength to strength and the statistics speak for themselves. In 2006 the site had 269,000 unique visitors. Enhancements were added in 2007, including an editorial system, where regular users of the site could elect to be on-line editors who posted and maintained their own content, photo galleries and an option to add news stories. The result was 8.3 million visitors in 2007.

The following year, Lucy Media launched two new websites and website traffic increased to 45.4 million visitors. In 2009, traffic grew to an astounding 129.4 million users and brought new pressures.

"The phenomenal increase in traffic on the websites placed enormous pressure on our IT capacity and we had to undertake a complete rebuild of the software platform," Alex said.



"I gained a lot from these programs and saw for myself the value of active business mentoring. The ACT Government is to be commended for their efforts to provide practical assistance to new businesses."

"We also had to increase our staff numbers."

"Staffing has been a huge challenge for us", Alex said. "Like anyone working in social media today, we are breaking new ground. In 2010 our websites attracted 174 million visitors and these numbers continue to rise.

"These are exciting times, but to keep up we need to ensure we are continually innovating and, at the





the 2010 Canberra BusinessPoint Awards. For Alex, the rewards have been much more than the physical trophies.

“Participating in the awards process was a worthwhile experience,” he said.

“It was an excellent chance to reflect on our objectives and our methods – did we have the settings right, what might we do differently, where has the business come from, where is it now and where is it going.”

There are broader ramifications as well. The Award has clearly shown that focusing on online media is a viable business model, as well as demonstrating the opportunities for growth in this rapidly growing sector in Australia and abroad.

Alex is also giving back to community, mentoring young people interested in pursuing their own entrepreneurial dreams. Lucy Media is actively involved in mentorship programs run by the ACT Local Government, including the “Pathways to Success” program.

same time, make sure we have the right processes in place to manage continuing growth. Finding the right sort of technical and professional expertise is an ongoing challenge.”

In terms of exports, the four main markets for Lucy Media are the US (where whosdatedwho.com ranks in the top 500 websites), UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

“We chose to target the largest possible markets to gain economies of scale across our business,” Alex said.

Alex places a high value on the knowledge and experience gained from participating in the ACT Export Awards. The winner of the ACT Export Awards in both 2009 and 2010, Alex’s business also earned the title of “Enterprise of the Year Award” in

“The ACT Government puts considerable effort towards providing practical assistance to new businesses. It’s a good time for young businesses to take advantage of this.”

Alex has one piece of advice for anyone considering going through the Export Awards selection process for 2011 – “Go for it!”

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