

Local Entrepreneurs Series: Personalised Favours



Following attendance at the recent **Global Entrepreneurship Congress** in Melbourne, RDACC is shining a spotlight on the talent, skill and innovation of some of our most successful entrepreneurs right here on the Central Coast.

From **supercharged start-ups to side-hustles gone global**, we're highlighting the secrets to scaling-up happening in our own backyard.

First up, we're chatting to **ecommerce giants, Personalised Favours**, to find out how Founder, **Melissa Wilkinson**, and CEO and brother-in-law, **Matt Mosse-Robinson**, have taken a quest for personalised wedding favours and turned it into a **global enterprise**.



Let's turn the clock back to 2009. Melissa, can you tell us a little bit about the circumstances that led you to start Personalised Favours?

MW: Well, I'd just gotten engaged to my now-husband Mark, which meant I was busy cracking the champagne and getting all of the spreadsheets ready to plan my dream wedding.

I was on the lookout for invitations, favours and place cards that were unique and sentimental, but all I could find were just really traditional, cookie-cutter options. I wanted my big day to feel more personal, and it soon became pretty obvious that there was a 'me-sized' gap in this particular market! From there, I established my own online store and worked hard to fill it with personalised and affordable products.

So, what started as an eBay side-hustle from your garage soon turned into a full-blown juggernaut?

MW: Yes, I'm proud to say that Personalised Favours became one of the most dominant players in the Australian wedding industry. It really was such an exciting experience for me and a true labour of love.

While I started out with weddings, it wasn't long before I began trying to source items that would suit all of life's most important celebrations: birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and more.



And then you recruited some familiar faces to join you.

MW: That's right! In 2013, I joined forces with the 'brains trust' behind our operation: my brother-in-law, Matthew. He was a power player in the cutthroat world of corporate banking at the time.

MM-R: I had a busy working life, but I knew I wanted to have more time to spend with my family, as well as a more purposeful career. The concept of being my own boss was intriguing to me too, and I could really see the potential in the business from the start. I'm proud that together, we've transformed that humble backyard operation into a multimillion-dollar enterprise.

MW: And my husband Mark is also now our National Sales Manager (and an all 'round business whiz!)

Keeping it in the family! It's great to hear how passionate you all are about working together. What do your customers say they love most about your products?

MW: It's the personal touch and our out-of-the-box approach. By personalising an item with a recipient's name or a special message, you can take any product from the ordinary to the extraordinary. As we say it makes them 'gifts worth giving'.

We also offer 7-day customer service and customers can select one of eight personalisation options for each product or create their own entirely for no extra cost.

Well, you certainly found (and dominated!) that niche. Had you spent any time working in the online retail space beforehand?

MW: I had a background in Industrial Design and having worked with huge brands like Disney and Adidas, I think I knew exactly what I wanted the business to look like from the outset.

And you've been going from strength to strength ever since. You've recently been recognised with a number of national and industry awards.

MW: In 2022 we were named Medium Retailer of the Year by the National Retail Association and this year we were finalists in the National Innovation Retailer of the Year, alongside brands including Optus, Oz Hair and Beauty, and Underwear for Humanity.

We've also been named Ambassadors and inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Australian Bridal Industry Academy (ABIA), after taking home the Best Bonbonniere for over a decade.



This year, Matt and I were also both named within the Top 50 People in ECommerce.

Congratulations on this incredible nationwide recognition! Are you taking on overseas markets, too?

MM-R: Yes. Personalised Favours is the flagship brand of our Foresight Online Group, which has grown to incorporate six successful ecommerce businesses that operate throughout Australasia and the US.

It's amazing to see local Coastie entrepreneurs dominating in a very competitive national and international market. Your warehouse and HQ are in West Gosford, and all of your customisation also happens right here on the Coast.

What do you love most about living and working here?

MW: It's a great place to raise our young families and it's a bonus not to battle through Sydney traffic. It also feels good to contribute to our local community by employing over 60 locals between the ages of 16-60!

Can you tell us about some of the major milestones you've hit recently?

MM-R: Well, we now dispatch more than 100,000 orders across Australia, Asia-Pacific and the US every year, which is incredible when we think of how far we've come.

In 2021, we were also featured in the Australian Financial Review Fast100 list. That was such a proud moment for us, and a testament to everything we've achieved with our amazing team.

Sustainability is another big focus for brands and businesses. Can you tell us how you're tackling this at Personalised Favours?

MW: We're really committed to limiting our impact on our environment by reducing, reusing, and recycling whatever we can, whenever we can.

We've made a lot of impactful changes recently. For example, all of our products are now posted to our customers in recycled cardboard boxes and we use recycled paper for our void fill, opt for paper tape instead of plastic, and recycle all of our excess glass and cardboard waste, too.

We also undertook the big process of installing energy efficient lighting throughout our office and warehouse and we're continually looking at how we can reduce our footprint.



It's great to hear that businesses like yours are committed to making a more positive impact. What would be your advice to other Central Coast entrepreneurs or any locals looking to embark on a business venture?

MM-R: Make sure you have a strong support team around you. You might start out doing everything yourself, but it's important to recognise your strengths and as you grow, be able to delegate tasks so you can focus on the bigger picture. It's also critical to have the right systems and processes in place to support future growth.

MW: Trust your instincts. There have been many times when we've just decided to 'go for it', based on what we feel is right. Most of the time this has paid off!

So, what's next for Personalised Favours?

MW: We've recently custom built a dynamic imaging solution so that our customers can see exactly what their personalised products will look like before ordering online.

Very soon, we'll also be launching a new online store for Personalised Favours that has been designed to enhance the personalised gifting experience for every customer.

We're constantly looking at how we can improve our product offerings and user experience, and this means continually innovating to keep things fresh and fun for us and our customers!

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