

# Home-grown online gig guide

**Brisbane's 247Network is succeeding where bigger fish failed.**

Andrew Leask knows a lot about how young people plan their nights. He knows that they use the internet and he knows these online fact-finding missions take place during working hours. "You can hardly read a street mag at your desk but you can look up information online – our busiest times are between 11am and 6pm."

That's when people start to think about what they'll do that evening. And while it may not be what employers want to hear, it's great news for Andrew and brother Chris Kettle who founded 247Network in

Brisbane almost six years ago. The shoestring outfit, staffed by a team of twenty- and thirty-somethings, has managed to build a sustainable business out of online entertainment and dining guides, an area in which plenty of corporate heavyweights had come unstuck.

Between them, the company's 14 staff run sites for 20 cities and regions across Australia. To help contain costs, many of the 14,000 venues featured update their own listings. International expansion is planned, with partners in the UK,

the US and New Zealand, and the two brothers recently brought in a third shareholder to help fund new products. A paid listing model similar to that offered by Google is the main source of revenue and 247Network also sells webservices. At last count, it had built 300 websites for venues across the country. Base packages starting at \$750 give small operations the chance to get online.

The company has seen more generously backed competition come and go. When dotcom fever was raging through the business sector, the likes of Kgrind, Tribe, RushTV and Scape chewed through tens of millions in venture capital before folding.



The secret is running lean, Leask says. "We have spent our time gently growing, figuring out what makes money and what doesn't. It's not about how smart you are, or how much money you've got. It's how well you know the market. The major barrier to entry is knowing what you're doing."

Today the main competition comes from the Telstra-owned CitySearch. Like any good salesman, Leask presents this situation in the best possible light. "We try not to nominate CitySearch [as a competitor] ... CitySearch outsources much of its content, so it's more likely to be a customer."

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