

Lucky sevens for The Daily Buzz

One of the finalists in the 2013 Sanlam/Business Partners Entrepreneur of the Year competition is The Daily Buzz, an upmarket chain of corporate coffee bars. The announcement comes as the coffee bar company celebrates its seventh birthday in August and the opening of its seventh coffee bar.

The business is jointly owned and run by two brothers, Chris and Andrew Brown and, in an age in which most family-owned restaurants go out of business within the first four years of operations; they are thrilled to have found a winning 'recipe for success'.

Chris Brown, the operations director with a background in food and travel, has worked in some of the world's top hotels and restaurants. He attributes part of their success to having had - and implemented - a good idea at the right time.

Providing perfect coffee break

"More South African professionals are looking for a great specialty coffee in a trendy and convenient spot without having to stray too far from the office. One of our aims was to provide the perfect location to break away from those everyday pressures. We have structured our coffee bars so that they mostly work on a 'grab and go' basis, allowing employees to take a short break away from their desks without having lost too much time."

Interestingly, it was 'non-foodie' and financial expert brother, Andrew Brown, whose background lies in financial and risk management in commerce and the banking industry, who came up with the idea of providing premium coffee in the workplace. After first-hand experience of mediocre coffee, Andrew approached the bank where he worked with a proposal for a better offering. His employer took him up on the idea and he joined forces with his brother Chris.

Andrew Brown comments, "The aim was to provide quality coffee combined with great service and allow employees to return to their workstations quickly and efficiently. As part of the start-up plan, Chris trained at the London School of Coffee under the then UK- and World Barista champion. Since then he has enjoyed further training in Italy and the United States as well as coffee plantation visits in Africa. He has also judged at the South African Barista Championships."

Started on trading floor

The brothers opened their first coffee bar in August 2006 on the trading floor of the Investment Bank at Standard Bank head office in Johannesburg. Seven years later, as they wait in keen anticipation to hear the results of the 2013 Sanlam/Business Partners Entrepreneur of the Year® competition, they are proud of their success to date.

Chris Brown comments, "It takes continuous hard work, innovation and attention to detail to keep a restaurant running year

after year. Anyone who has ever been in the restaurant industry knows how competitive and cutthroat an industry it can be. Margins are low, volume is high and reputation is everything."

Andrew Brown concludes, "Small businesses have their own unique place in the economy, obviously by providing work for their employees as well as being traditionally open to innovation, new ideas and the accessible use of technology. As a services company we are reliant on people and have, over the years, steadily hired more employees. As of July this year, we now employ 58 people - something we are very proud of as South African entrepreneurs. It has been an incredible learning curve for us to get where we are now and we are proud to think that we are making our own contribution to South Africa's growth and economic well-being."

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