

Our roast to one of Ballina's top bean businesses!

In the wake of the BCCI and Northern Star business excellence awards, we speak with The Bean Bank about their own journey

Three years ago, partners Effie Vouris and Glenn Anthony started The Bean Bank in Ballina. Effie spearheads their fully fresh, sustainable menu and cooks every dish with love; Glenn is the front man who recently found his calling for roasting. Both work super hard and their business is now getting the rewards it truly deserves. Collins Hume spoke with Glenn to find out how it all started, including their journey to becoming publicly acclaimed for a second time in the business excellence awards.

Glenn is the first to admit that The Bean Bank was the brainchild of two creative souls who serendipitously stumbled across an empty shop space thinking it might make a nice café. Soon, the day-dreaming turned into number-crunching and, with a little bit of capital and a lot of inspiration, The Bean Bank opened its doors as an incredibly creative, artistic coffee destination. Glenn says, "We knew there was an opportunity to make a better cup of coffee. Leaning on our European heritage and our visual arts experience, the dream became a reality before we knew it!"

Before long The Bean Bank's popularity grew, as did the funds to do more with the business, which is when Glenn took up his vocation as a bean roaster, "We wanted to take our business to the next level so we dramatically improved the quality of the product. With extra training I learnt the skill of roasting and invested in the right equipment. Then we introduced our blend to customers to the extent that it became more popular than the bought-in alternative and soon outsold all other brands!"

Now The Bean Bank is positioned more as a roasting house than a café, and is becoming a wholesaler offering roasting to other cafés, restaurants and large bulk food suppliers. Glenn says, "Part of our success is recognition for doing things well. We now own an industrial-sized roaster yet the high quality is still maintained which has allowed us to develop two product blends called Bean in Love and Loves Bites."

"Our quality ethic pervades everything we do so our customers react positively. We never anticipated our success; we've learnt as we've gone along, but we have always stuck to our guns."

Part of that learning process included managing cash flow and keeping on top of the books. Glenn says, "At one point we realised that some admin tasks were becoming full on. We needed to track the money going out – how were we performing – so were referred to Chris Atkinson at Collins Hume who keeps us operating smoothly. Chris helped take our business to another level by getting us in control to make informed decisions. We get meaningful feedback from Chris's exposure to other businesses to see how we generally compare."

"Many businesses appear to have great models, but poor cash management and lacking business admin skills can turn it into a nightmare. Lucky for us, we learnt early on how to manage our business – Chris helped us put systems into place which have been brilliant. Collins Hume's live BankLink feeds give us real-time information so it's like having an extra accounting resource working away in the background."



"We implemented proper procedures and systems and may have already finessed a model that works and could be replicated if the opportunity arose."

Three years on Effie now works in the business for three days, and on it for two. Glenn works the hours that suit him – he's covered by a dependable team which, he believes, is a good tonic for sanity's sake. Staff training is key to continuing the quality of products and their menu; they hire people who share their passion and who want to be there.

"We've got a business that has potential to grow and optimise opportunities – the recipe is right to build on that. It takes patience to build the core business yet we now have the flexibility to choose what we'd like to do. It's a much better balance."

As 2011 Customer Service category winner *plus* 2012 Food & Beverage category winner the latter, Glenn believes, proves that their philosophy is also a winner, "The awards process made us realise that we're reaching a wider audience than we thought – who could believe we're rated #1 on tripadvisor.com.au? Website reviews are pleasantly surprising and humbling. Our beans are now speaking for us!"

At Collins Hume, we congratulate our clients The Bean Bank on their recent accolade, and look forward to helping Effie and Glenn get every ounce of goodness out of their business for many years to come.