

starting SMALL AND SIMPLE

YOUNG PARENTS EARN EXTRA PART-TIME INCOME WITH SIMPLICITY VENDING

⇒ Tracey-Ann and Mahesh De Silva met while at Lincoln University and today hold down high-powered jobs in accounting and IT. When young Toby came along 19 months ago, Tracey-Ann moved to working part-time but despite that, the young couple had an eye to the future. 'We are both very business-oriented,' says Tracey-Ann, 'and we were really keen to start something ourselves. Given our current commitments, though, we had to find a way of creating passive income that didn't require much time and effort.'

'It was also vital from a financial point of view that we started small, and between them these restrictions soon boiled the search down to not many options. A little research showed that some businesses were simply under-reporting the amount of real effort and time required, but when we looked at Simplicity Vending we felt that it had a certain integrity about it.'

Simplicity Vending is a system of vending machines that dispense confectionery and novelty items from a variety of high-traffic locations. The machines are simple and robust, hard to break and easy to service. They were brought to New Zealand by entrepreneurial teacher Steve Sartin who, with his wife Leigh, started the company in Hamilton in 2004. 'Just like Tracey-Ann and Mahesh we were looking for a way of creating an additional income that would work for us in terms of both return and lifestyle,' Steve says. 'We realised vending machines could provide that, not just for us but for others too, and over the last six years we have been proved right many times.'

Although finance hasn't always been easy to come by recently, when the De Silva's went to their local bank they found them 'surprisingly helpful. Our bank manager asked a lot of very good, professional questions which made us think, and at the end of the day the bank was happy to support us.'

GETTING STARTED IS EASY

Simplicity Vending offers a number of different packages to enable licensees to get started. 'The latest is our *Beat the Recession package* which costs \$19,997 and buys 10 machines,' says Steve. 'It is designed to allow people to start a small business with low capital. Beyond that licensees can select their level of investment to suit the time and money they have available.' Tracey-Ann and Mahesh went with a larger package of 25 machines, all of which arrived at their Christchurch home one day together with Steve himself.

'As part of the package, Steve comes to help you put the machines together and help you set up the business for a couple of days,' says Tracey-Ann. 'It may look easy when you're watching but doing it yourself is a very different experience so it was great to have Steve there to back us up. We soon got the hang of it.'

Choosing locations for vending machines is an art, but one which Tracey-Ann has found she can develop. 'Steve, being American, has a tendency to march in saying something like, "I've got a machine for you...!" My style is different - I've done a lot of my site prospecting on the phone, and found that generally businesses are very happy to see you and encouraging about the idea. It is important to show some empathy with business owners. Having the ability to chat when you go in to service the machines and show a genuine concern for their world goes a long way.'

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

A year after they began, the majority of the vending machines Tracey-Ann placed are still in the same location. 'As Steve explained at the beginning,

TRACEY-ANN DE SILVA AND SON TOBY: 'VENDING MACHINES WORK FOR US'



you have to go through a process of trial and error to get them in exactly the right place so we have moved quite a number six or seven times within the site to get them right and maximise income. We also have one machine that moves from a summer to a winter site. It's not hard, it just requires thought and persistence - and once you get the position right and see the growth, it's well worth it.'

Tracey-Ann can see them expanding their Simplicity Vending business in the future. 'It has been a gradual process, and we've probably expanded more slowly because of our time commitments,' she says. 'We might have been a little unrealistic at the beginning, because after all we have two jobs and Toby, but servicing the machines is pretty straightforward and only takes a few hours here and there. We know we can grow the business as soon as we're ready. Steve always has loads of ideas and is always very accessible.'

And Steve believes in being there for others, too. 'We like to give back rather than just take all the time so we contribute a percentage direct to World Vision. Last year Simplicity Vending contributed around \$15,000 to the charity, and that's a great feeling for everyone involved. It is a simple business but it's one that enables many people to create a better future. That's what Tracey-Ann and Mahesh are building for themselves, and you can too. Call me and see if there's a package to suit you.' ■

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