

# come out for COFFEE

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN AT THE TOP OF ONE OF NEW ZEALAND'S BEST-KNOWN HOSPITALITY BRANDS, WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

⇒ When Rod de Vries returned from his OE, like most other graduates he had ambitions but no money. 'I was penniless so I took a part-time job with Pizza Hut and never got away!' he laughs. 'I spent the next 18 years working for Restaurant Brands, which owns Pizza Hut, Starbucks and KFC, and ended up as Chief Operating Officer.'

Earlier this year, Rod found his role made redundant. 'It was probably the boot up the bum I needed,' he admits. 'My wife Penny and I had often talked over the possibilities of owning our own business and I had kept an eye on opportunities. One competitor I was very aware of was Esquires Coffee Houses. I'd seen their growth over the last few years and it had been very impressive.'

Rod credits his wife for making the initial move. 'I was enjoying my time off, to be honest, but we'd been frequenting the Albany Esquires and met one of their legal team. They told us about some upcoming sites and my wife rang Joe Rechichi, Esquires' CEO. It all went from there and when we started doing due diligence it confirmed that this is a brand that is going places. It has an innovative approach to the market and is currently growing far faster than any of its competitors.'

Needless to say, Rod also researched the alternatives thoroughly. 'As a potential franchisee, I found Esquires made it easy from the start. You get to meet the personalities who make up the leadership team and you are presented with all the information. The operation is very straightforward, even for an inexperienced café owner – all the food is prepared off site so there is no costly kitchen equipment and no expensive staff. The training and manuals are excellent and the system is so thorough that if you follow it properly it would be very hard to fall over.'

## VALUABLE BRAND, VALUABLE SYSTEM

Rod purchased the brand new Esquires Coffee Houses outlet in Highbury, on Auckland's North Shore. Despite his vast experience, he admits that setting up his own business made him nervous. 'This is a top of the range franchise and a significant investment, so you want to make sure you've prepared properly. It was reassuring when I went to Westpac with my business plan and found that having the Esquires name on it helped ease the process. Now I'm just excited and raring to go.'

Having been through the Esquires training, Rod is gaining experience in an existing outlet while his new store is being prepared. 'With my background, I thought I knew a lot of this stuff already, but I find I'm *still* learning things – particularly around the accounting side. That's the beauty of the franchise – it covers all the bits and pieces necessary to run a business, not just how to make a great cup of coffee. I think the



REDUNDANCY WAS THE 'BOOT UP THE BUM' ROD DE VRIES NEEDED TO MAKE HIM EXPLORE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES WITH ESQUIRES

key to being a franchisee is to apply those systems and to understand that there really is some hard work involved, especially in the initial stages. Yes, you have to love people and customer service but you also need to remember you have bought a franchise which has rules for good reasons. If you don't like those, go and throw your money at an idea of your own!

## RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

Esquires Coffee Houses have opened 45 outlets around the country since launching the brand in New Zealand in 2002. The stylish and comfortable outlets have become a popular destination for business people, tourists, students, shoppers and 'anyone who fancies a first class coffee,' says Joe Rechichi. 'Our processes enable franchisees to concentrate on customer service, and we have many successful outlets that have built a real fan base among their regulars because of that. This approach is reinforced with community initiatives such as loyalty programmes benefitting local charities, a commitment to serving only Fair Trade Coffee and free wi-fi access.'

A new Esquires Coffee House franchise requires an investment of approximately \$290,000 plus a \$75,000 fee. 'The good news is that we still have excellent new locations coming up throughout the country all the time,' says Joe. 'You certainly don't need a hospitality background – in fact, most of our franchisees have never worked in the industry before and our franchisees include everyone from ex-schoolteachers to ex-bankers. There's no shortage of customers and good premises are more affordable than ever. For people who can demonstrate that they have the same vision and determination as Rod, then the opportunities are right here, right now!'

## MULTIPLE OUTLETS ENCOURAGED

Rod de Vries concludes by saying that one of the other attractions Esquires offers is the potential to build an empire of his own. 'New franchisees are actually encouraged to aim for more than one outlet once they've proven themselves,' he enthuses. 'There are already several franchisees who own multiple outlets and that says a great deal for their own confidence and the company's growth aspirations. If you're serious about business, like we are, Esquires just has to appeal.' ■

## ADVERTISER INFO

John Kitto  
0800 4 ESQUIRES  
M ++ 64 21 924 763  
P ++ 64 9 377 7615  
F ++ 64 9 377 7618  
John.kitto@esquirescoffee.net  
www.esquirescoffee.co.nz