

When GRIME PAYS

THIS FORMER EXECUTIVE WAS REJUVENATED WHEN HE BOUGHT A GROUTPRO FRANCHISE



⇒ Ted Beddoes cheerfully confesses that during all his years in the corporate world he can't remember anyone saying to him, 'Wow, that's brilliant!' Three months into self-employment as a GroutPro franchisee, he hears it all the time, and each time it gives him a real sense of achievement. Launched earlier this year by business partners Joe Hesmondhalgh and Rob Howard, GroutPro is the country's first franchise to provide specialist grout and tile restoration and rejuvenation as well as after-installation tile care.

Until March this year, Ted was contracts manager with a major logistics firm, but when the Japanese parent decided to close the company down Ted and his 30 staff found themselves unemployed. Very much a career executive (his resume includes eight years as a National Bank commercial manager), Ted knew that it was time to move away from staff and other issues for a future that involved him reporting only to himself. 'At 50 and having never been self-employed, it took quite an effort to put aside advertisements for executive positions,' admits Ted. 'I looked at lots of franchise opportunities before I stumbled on GroutPro and it immediately stood out. I liked the concept, I liked the 90% profit margins and the fact that the entry fee and set-up costs came to under \$20,000 really appealed. At that price, it was worth a crack.'

'Mind you, as someone who had always been too busy with career and family commitments for DIY work, I did wonder if I was practical enough. I got in touch with Joe and a few days later my wife Fiona and I met with him in Tauranga. He told us about himself and GroutPro. We told him about ourselves and ambitions for the future. We could see there were synergies, and although Joe cautioned us to take time to think it over and take professional advice, we more or less signed the franchise agreement there and then.'



TED BEDDOES LOVES CUSTOMERS TELLING HIM 'WOW, THAT'S BRILLIANT!'

LACK OF DIY SKILLS NO HINDRANCE

Ted and five other franchisees were the first to go through Rob Howard's thorough training programme which he reports he thoroughly enjoyed and, to his surprise, proved his lack of DIY skills was no hindrance. Returning to Auckland an approved GroutPro specialist, Rob's words of advice rang in his ears... 'Practise on family and friends.' However, fate had other ideas. 'I arrived back on a Friday with every intention of first practising and then putting effort into finding jobs,' laughs Ted. 'Instead, jobs found me. On Monday morning a friend of a friend rang up needing tiles and grout cleaning. Of course I couldn't turn that down. It took me longer than it should have but I had quoted a fair price and stuck to it. And when I finished, I heard the magic words "Wow, that's brilliant!" for the first time.'

Ted attributes a lot of his business growth to customer referrals, but he's not standing still when it comes to marketing. As part of the franchise package he received 5000 free flyers, most of which he's already put out into the marketplace, and feels the GroutPro brand really made an impact at September's Auckland Home Show. Ted and fellow franchisee Peter Lundon shared a stand and confirmed that a tremendous number of people are unhappy with the state of tile work and grout in their homes – and want them to do something about it.

MEETING ALL EXPECTATIONS

'Do I regret my decision to buy into what was then a basically unproven franchise?' asks Ted. 'The answer has to be "definitely not"'. I had high expectations and it's met them all. There's a direct correlation between what you put into the business and what you get out of it, and it might sound clichéd but being self-employed is giving me the flexibility I imagined. It's great to be able to find time to watch my son Lance play squash – he's the current New Zealand under-17 champion. I'm more than happy with standards of support from Rob and Joe, and also the franchise package which included all equipment, tools, products such as exclusive Colourseal developed for GroutPro, sales and marketing material, manuals, uniforms, stationery and even a personalised email address.

'Something else I've appreciated is the franchisee forum on the website. It works really well. Post up a problem with a job and you'll get all sorts of helpful advice from other franchisees. It makes you feel part of a team. Earnings so far are in line with what I budgeted for and as I get better and quicker the income is increasing. Even though I've only been going three months, I've got plenty of work and leads to follow up. But best of all, I really enjoy the work. Being told "Wow, that's brilliant!" really does give you a sense of achievement.'

And he recommends other people in his situation to move fast. 'For my money, there's no better way to win over consumers and generate a good income than a GroutPro franchise. You could say that with tiles and grout, grime pays!' ■

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