

Phone duo strike it lucky

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THERE is no better time to take risks than while you are young and clueless.

Luckily for the owners of Strike Group Australia, Chris Ryan and Adam Rockett, their blindfolded teenage plunge into the world of business saw them land in pastures of four-leaf clovers.

These two men certainly appear to have luck on their side.

As disillusioned Nudgee College students, Ryan and Rockett left school in 1997 and headed straight for university. "We thought we sort of had to go to uni," Ryan says. "Everyone else was."

But, not long into their respective courses of teaching and computer science, they left the books behind – and, although it was barely legal then for them to drink it themselves, entered the world of wine distribution.

"I think we drank most of what we were supposed to be selling," Ryan said. "It's no wonder things didn't work out."

By a stroke of sheer luck, a South African contact lured the pair into partnering him in a telecommunications opportunity.

Now, sitting comfortably in their mid-20s, Ryan and Rockett are at the helm of the multimillion-dollar empire which is Strike Group Australia.

The company recorded a \$13.5 million turnover in the 2005-06 financial year.

Strike Group Australia is a mobile phone and accessory wholesaler now selling to more than 72 countries worldwide and servicing international clients including British Telecommunications (now BT Group) and Singapore Telecommunications (SingTel).

But Ryan and Rockett can still remember the effort behind their first few thousand dollars.

"I think the only reason we took risks and got into this was because we were young, not tied down by family or other commitments – and we just realised we had pretty much nothing to lose," Ryan said.

"If we were older when the opportunity arose, we probably would never have done it – it was the timing that was perfect."

The best friends, who still hang out in their spare time, attribute their success to a down-to-earth upbringing by both of their families.

"We never got things given to us without working for them while we were kids," Ryan says.

"We worked out how hard it was to earn money from 15 years of age, when Adam was a checkout chap and I worked in a bakery."

And what is their secret for moving onwards and upwards in the business world?

"Get good help," Ryan says. "A Good team is the key to success".

"We have 17 team members at Strike and it is a really dynamic, committed, focused and multicultural team.

"You have to remember to party a bit too – Adam and I have definitely done our fair share of partying, and we like to keep things young and vibrant in the workplace too."

Strike Group Australia is hot favourite to win the Ernst & Young global Entrepreneur of the Year title, with winners to be announced this month.

Former EOY winners account for 54 per cent of the Nasdaq 100, and the award has been presented to more than 900 of the world's most successful and innovative entrepreneurs in more than 40 countries.

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