

Solid Education and Business Grounding Paying Dividends for Young Perth Entrepreneur

Lejo Ouwendyk, the 32-year-old Managing Partner of successful mid-tier accountancy firm, Kennerlys, and President of the Stirling Business Association has had a very big year, capped off by his inclusion in the coveted *WA Business News 40-under-40 awards*, which were announced on 23 February at a gala ceremony held at Sir James Mitchell Park in South Perth.

He was also a speaker at the prestigious RSM Bird Cameron Future Leaders Forum, held at the Hilton Hotel on June 2. As a panellist, Lejo provided his insight into the topic "Going the Extra Mile in a Competitive Industry" and used the experience gained from his five years as Managing Director of accountancy firm Kennerlys.

Since taking the helm at Kennerlys, Lejo has quickly grown it into one of Perth's most well-respected boutique accounting practices. He said taking on the lead role at Kennerlys at such a young age was a challenging and at the same time exciting prospect: "In 2006, an opportunity came up to become Managing Partner of Kennerlys, and while I was obviously very excited, I knew I was going to face my share of challenges," said Mr Ouwendyk.

Lejo said it was his commitment to customer service that helped set Kennerlys apart from other firms within the industry and was something that he believed strongly in. His passion for customer service excellence was rewarded last year with Kennerlys being a finalist for two awards in the Telstra Stirling Small Business Awards in the areas of Quality Customer Service and Community Spirit.

About Lejo

After completing a Commerce degree at the University of Notre Dame in 1998, Lejo joined the Audit division at Arthur Andersen in Perth. Two years later he took up a Taxation position with Sothertons in West Perth and following this he was involved with setting up a number of small businesses, including his own accounting practice.

"This period of my life gave me invaluable experience and a first-hand understanding of business owner's needs, something that gives me a definite edge in my current role," Lejo said. "This experience means I can relate to our clients issues because at some stage I had probably faced them myself," he added.

Mr Ouwendyk is also a strong contributor to the local business community and regularly conducts workshops and seminars to small business owners. Being the President of the Stirling Business Association also gives him great insights into the issues and challenges facing the Perth business community and it is a role which he takes great pride in.

"The Stirling Business Association is a great way of bringing likeminded business people together to share ideas and discuss issues and as President, I feel privileged to be in a position to help shape the local business landscape and act as a voice for our members," he said.

Away from work Lejo has a passion for windsurfing, paddling the Swan River and playing the saxophone, and as a father to three young daughters is kept very busy on the home front: "It can be hard at times, but I try to keep a good work-life balance and my escape is windsurfing and playing the sax – when I'm not doing that I can usually be found on a shopping expedition with my girls!"

Recently, with help from his family and the team at Kennerlys, Mr Ouwendyk raised enough money to build 40-bed dormitory wing at an orphanage in Kenya, which was recently completed; a project he said was very rewarding: "While it sounds like a cliché, giving back in this way was one of the most rewarding things I've ever been involved in." he said.

Lejo is no stranger to charity work, having also participated in the well-publicised *Vinnies CEO Sleepout*, a charity initiative to raise funds and awareness of homelessness in Australia. On June 16 Lejo, like over 700 of his peers Australia-wide, left his creature comforts behind to spend a night without a roof over his head, just like over 100,000 homeless Australian's do every night.

He survived the night and more importantly was able to raise \$7375 for the charity.

"I think it's very important that individuals and businesses that are in a position to give back to the community, do so at every opportunity, Mr Ouwendyk said. "Whether that means helping to fund a community project in

another country or forgoing a comfortable night sleep to raise money for WA's homeless, I certainly encourage all my associates in the business community to do so

Lejo says his solid upbringing and education have been the catalysts for his success.

"I remember as a kid, I would watch the way my Father ran his commercial painting business and this has held me in good stead along with my schooling at Mazenod College and my tertiary studies at the University of Notre Dame," said Lejo.

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About Kennerlys

Kennerlys has been supporting and providing services to prominent and successful Perth business people since its inception in the 1970's.

Specialising in Taxation, Superannuation and Enterprise Development services Kennerlys are dedicated to helping clients achieve both their business objectives and personal ambitions. Kennerlys prides itself on delivering services within a professional, approachable and caring environment where team members have the opportunity to work with clients to truly become part of their clients businesses.

The Kennerlys team is currently headed up by Lejo Ouwendyk who has been Managing Partner since 2006, and Sue Peterson who is a Senior Associate and has been at Kennerlys since its inception in 1989. Supporting Lejo and Sue are a dedicated team of professional & administration staff.