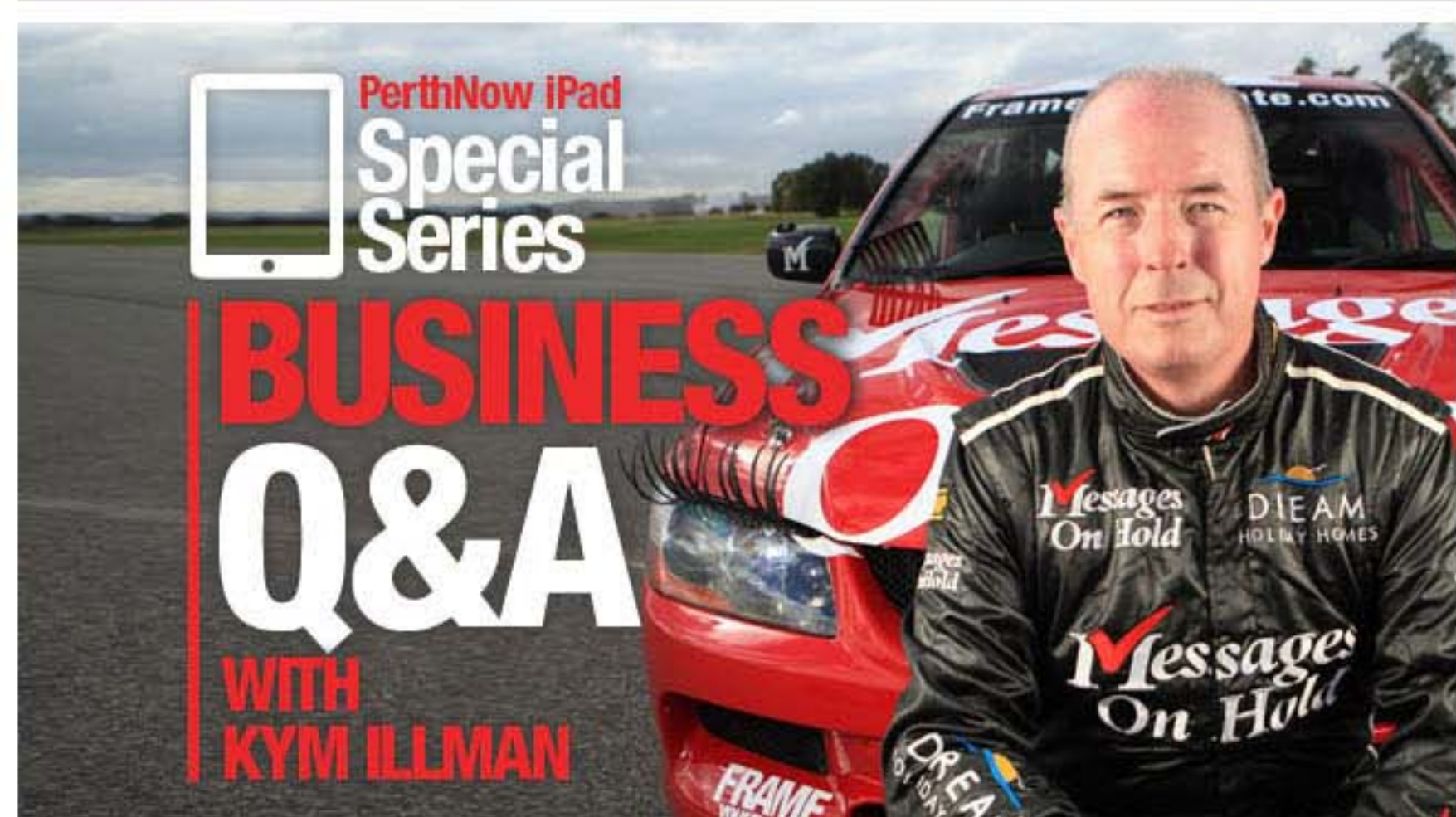


Business Q&A with Kym Illman

PerthNow | August 30, 2011 5:24PM

A+ A- Share

Recommend Send Be the first of your friends to recommend this. 0 tweet Share 0



Source: PerthNow

MESSAGES on Hold founder Kym Illman talks about how new communication tools are changing the way his company offers its services, the pressures of high wages and his favourite sports car, a Porsche Spyder 550.

Q: Messages on Hold has been around for more than 20 years, how does the company keep up with the massive demands for quality customer service in a market that's flooded with advertising and mass consumption?

A: I hate the mass approach to marketing and service. We personalise almost everything we do. I remember receiving a bottle of wine from a supplier with their logo printed on it. We send wine, but we print our client's name on the label. We know a lot about our customers and use that information when we speak to them. It needs to be obvious to customers that they are treasured, not one amongst a mass.

Q: How do you think new communication technologies such as social networking sites have changed how you operate the company and the services you offer your customers?

Subscribe to our Email Newsletter
SIGN UP NOW

A: We access many of our clients' Facebook pages, note that they're promoting a certain product/service and then suggest they mirror those promotions to waiting callers. Busy clients love the fact that we're proactive. Social media has also accelerated the spread of our viral videos with users posting their FrameYourMate.com or WorldsGreatestBusinessMind.com videos on their pages – bless them.

Q: From time to time, Messages on Hold releases viral videos, such as FrameYourMate.com – what is the aim of these videos?

To make people laugh, enhance our brand and at the end of day, say yes to promotional messages on their phone system from us. When a friend sends you a video, you'll most likely watch it, especially when it's all about you. Being tight with our marketing budget we love the idea that the public is out there marketing Messages On Hold to their friends and at no cost to us.

Q: Messages on Hold has offices in Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong; does the company need to differentiate its product offering for each country?

A: Yes. In Asia we mostly deal with very large companies who need different language recordings for the interactive voice response (IVR) systems, the on hold recordings are an afterthought. Being able to quickly and economically translate and record in many languages is crucial. In Australia we work with businesses across the entire spectrum but mainly for on hold messages with IVR being secondary but as new phone systems have this IVR feature built in, that market is growing.

Q: What is the biggest challenge facing your company, and what do you think is the solution?

A: Being based in Perth where the cost of running a business is so high because of the wage pressures and having 80% of our clients in the eastern states where businesses are experiencing tough times. The solution, focus on Asia for future growth and continue to find ways to reduce our overheads using technology.

Q: With the company's strong emphasis on customer service, what are your thoughts on customer service in Perth?

A: No better or worse than anywhere else in Australia. Nowhere near as good as Japan but better than the US. I want to be wowed when I spend money in Perth but it happens rarely. It's not hard. Sometimes it's just thanking me by name as they hand back my credit card or calling me to advise the progress of an order instead of waiting for me to call and ask what's going on.

Q: We hear you're a car enthusiast, what is your favourite car and why?

A Porsche Spyder 550. Red leather interior, low slung, a favourite of James Dean - it's such a lovely vehicle and highly collectable. Wouldn't much care how it drove, just to have it in my glass garage to look at would suffice.

Q: What is your favourite place to travel to?

A: Lancelin. I built a home there a couple of years ago and now spend every weekend I can there. 80 minutes from Perth, glorious beaches, great fishing and sand dunes for quad biking.

Q: What would you be doing if you weren't at the helm of your business?

A: Working on progressing Lancelin as a tourist destination and doing more for the local football club. I've taken over some of their promotion this year including the photographing and production of a "Nearly-Nude" 2012 Calendar featuring local footballers and netballers. It's an eye-opener!

Q: What would you do if you were Premier of WA for the day?

A: Outlaw the sale of cigarettes in the state.