



LASER GROUP'S DEPENDABLE SPIRIT

Laser Group Management Pty Ltd

4/1008 Doncaster Road, Doncaster East, Victoria 3109

Tel: 03 98421488

info@lasergroup.com.au | www.lasergroup.com.au



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Laser Group

LASER GROUP'S DEPENDABLE SPIRIT

LASER GROUP'S LOYAL CUSTOMERS
AND STRONG FOUNDATION MAKE IT
A TOP CHOICE FOR AUSTRALASIA'S
ELECTRICAL AND PLUMBING NEEDS

WRITTEN BY ALLIE SCHRATZ
PRODUCED BY CASSANDRA LUDDEN



A COMPANY WITH MODEST BEGINNINGS in 1983, Laser Group has maintained its core structure and customer values to grow into one of the largest electrical and plumbing contractor networks across Australia and New Zealand. Laser Group traces its origins back to 'Laser Electrical Ltd,' the company that was co-founded in 1983 by David Clemmett and Peter Bassett. Clemmett and Bassett grew their company through the eighties into one of the largest of its kind in Auckland, New Zealand.

In the 1990s, the pair realised that their company was a good size and they had successfully built up a loyal customer base, but they had not established an exit strategy for themselves; the business had been built to depend entirely on their continued involvement.

They wanted to “get to the stage where they could exit themselves from the day-to-day running of the business and [have it] continue to grow,” says Managing Director and partial owner Steve Keil, who established the Australian division of the company.





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Employees: 2,000+

EST'd: 1867

Industry: Construction

Services: Plumbing and building material merchant and supplier of plumbing solutions

On-Going Projects:
Boeing Australia – fire service renewal and upgrade project in Melbourne being completed in conjunction with Laser Plumbing Diamond Creek

Southern Water – Water meter renewal project in Tasmania being completed in conjunction with Laser Plumbing Moonah

Management:

> **David Worley**
Chief Executive

> **Garry Lally**
General Manager Network

> **Glenn Palmer**
Regional Manager

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For much of the following decade, Clemmett and Bassett set to work creating systems: establishing the Laser Electrical brand, hiring managers to balance the workload and utilising software systems – quite sophisticated for the time – that would help run the business.

By the late nineties, the two entrepreneurs realised how valuable their systems had become: so valuable in fact, they decided to start offering them to other trade businesses. In 1999, they began licensing the Laser Electrical business model to other companies throughout New Zealand, and by the end of 2003, they had become a full franchise business with 20 clients.

AUSTRALIAN EXPANSION

When Clemmett and Bassett decided to expand Laser Electrical into Australia, they enlisted Keil, an executive with one of Australia's leading electrical wholesalers. As a former electrical contractor, Keil was impressed with the pair's business model.

"I realised it had a long way to go, but the foundational stuff was really good," Keil says. "If I were still contracting, it was the kind of thing that would help me run a better business."

He agreed to expand the business into his home country, and by 2004, Laser Electrical had set up shop in Melbourne.

In 2006, following the same system as its predecessor, the plumbing division of the company was initiated.

“The more I looked at it, the more I realised that the electrical contractors run their businesses in similar ways to plumbing contractors; they just install different things on site,” says Keil.

“The systems we have built up could transition into that industry, and they’ve done so quite successfully.”

Today, the company, rebranded as Laser Group to encompass both sectors, has more than 190 companies in Australasia. In Australia, the company is just short of 100 franchise companies,



but considering their recent success in bringing on nine more clients since 1 July, Keil is confident they’ll reach that goal by early to mid-2012.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Laser Group may be a franchise, but when it comes to the business model, they operate their company much differently from other franchises in the trades industry.

“There [are] lots of franchise models, and a lot of them in our environment are sole-trader business models [where] someone may have worked for someone else,” Keil explains.

“There are people who want to

start their own business, but they're not really sure how to do that."

Instead of building upon the sole trading business model, Laser Group works with well-established companies whose owners are simply overwhelmed with the amount of work required to continually operate or grow their businesses.

"They say, 'I want to get to the stage, as the business owner, where I don't have to be doing all the work all the time,'" says

Keil. "I want to start working on the business, not in the business." Whether the company has 6 or 120 employees, Laser Group's business model gives them the tools to achieve their goals.

"When they join Laser Group, we provide systems supportive of business planning and development, and

they get to leverage off the knowledge base within the group," says Keil. "Our franchise is 'conversion franchising' [because] they're already in business. "It's not like someone deciding 'do I start this business or not,' it's whether I convert to the Laser way. It's a

very smooth transition." Once a business decides to join Laser Group, they are specially inducted and given a new title: Member. "We call our franchisees members. We don't like the whole terminology of 'franchise' or 'franchisee'

because it really suggests a hierarchal relationship," says Keil. "Our members are our customers [and] we look after them to help them build better businesses. Our business is better by default."

New members are then ready to start business planning with a Laser Group consultant, but the

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STEVE KEIL



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member runs the meeting. “This isn’t us telling them how to run their business; this is us helping to leverage out of them what their dreams are for their life and their business and documenting that in a simple way that they can follow,” says Keil. “Their goals might be lifestyle drivers, aggressive growth, whatever it is; we want to help them achieve that.” After the initial meeting, the consultant and business owner meet at least quarterly, but the client has many additional tools available such as online training systems, webinars, and access to Laser Group’s proprietary software program called ‘Laser Pro,’ which does everything from quoting and jobbing to tracking timesheets and job sheets via iPads, PCs or iPhones in the field. It also includes a full-blown Quickbooks QBI accounting system. Not only does this positively impact the organisation of the company; it also makes them appear more attractive for prospective Members and customers alike.

“The electrical and plumbing contracting industries in Australia and New Zealand are highly fragmented,” says Keil. “By giving [businesses] the national brand position and our business systems and tools, it’s easy to see that businesses will be more saleable than those contracting companies without such benefits. For example, potential buyers can easily see how the business works from the inside out: they can see how the system runs and see that the businesses brand attracts customers, rather than all the goodwill and management systems being with the business owner. In the latter example, when the business owner leaves,



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the customers and goodwill go with him. “It makes the business more financially worthy,” says Keil.

Over the past two years, Laser Group has built relationships with industry suppliers and bodies that assist its members to introduce sustainable solutions to their customers. For example, many of their electrical & plumbing members include solar solutions to their services offering, for which the Australian government provides rebates. On the electrical side, they install LED lighting and help residences and commercial buildings monitor their power usage to find out where

they can cut costs.

“We’ll go in and offer to replace old products with new [energy saving] ones and determine how long it will take power-saving costs to accumulate the funds necessary for the installation,” says Keil.

Laser has also assisted residences, businesses and schools with cutting down on plumbing costs by installing water catchment and management systems, solar-powered water heaters, and other energy-efficient systems that help conserve water & power usage.



GIVING BACK

Wherever Laser Group holds its annual conference, they like to give back to the local community with a project. In 2010, thanks to donations from their suppliers, roughly 50 plumbers and electricians refurbished a local children's respite centre in Christchurch with hot water heaters, new light fixtures and plasma screen TVs. After their 2011 conference in Darwin, a donated bus of 60 people travelled 80 kilometres to renovate a special needs kids' camp.

COMPANY FUTURE

Laser Group's primary future goal is to broaden its footprint across the country, growing to between 200 and 250 contracting companies in each sector.

“We want the right members in the right locations that we can assist with growing their businesses,” says Keil. “That way we can serve our customers with the same high level of service. Whether you need a solution in Hobart or Noosa, we can provide all your electrical and plumbing needs.”

STATISTICS



Name: Laser Group

Country: Australia

Employees:
Over 1500 in Members
network in Australia

Est: 1983 as Electrical
Contractor, 1999
as Franchisor

Industry: Electrical &
Plumbing Franchising

Key People:
Stephen Keil (Steve)
Managing Director & CEO

Website:
www.lasergroup.com.au