

Case Study

Alice Springs Helicopters

Verve Services:

- Business Overview
- Business Plan

“We wanted an independent advisor to tell us if we were on track. With the guidance of Verve Group we have doubled our customers and doubled our sales; importantly we have increased our profit.”

Chris & Mechelle Collins

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Right: Chris and Mechelle Collins at their Alice Springs base



The Business

A charter helicopter company working in tourism, mining exploration and pastoral industries. The company initially had two arms to deal with tourism and non-tourism contracts and the entity owns 6 helicopters, an airport hangar and offices.

The Challenge

Initially known as Australian National Helicopters, Alice Springs Helicopters relocated from Darwin to provide a central hub for national operations and meet the growing demand for quality helicopter services around Alice Springs. Unforeseen demand meant the business grew so rapidly, the directors required new plans to focus efforts. While the company had years of industry experience and advice, being new to the Alice Springs business community left them without independent support for sharing strategies and ideas. Soon, the business controlled the owners rather than the other way around. Despite getting bookings, they weren't maximizing profit and their focus was spread over too many non-core priorities. Verve came on-board and through a Review, learnt the two separate brands caused confusion, and the company lacked local advocates. The owners had to set priorities closer to home.

The Solution

Martin immediately made low cost suggestions to increase merchandising revenue. The reception area was reorganized, placing merchandise and scenic images within view of clients waiting for flights. Merchandise was packaged with a visible price tag to be easily bought as mementoes upon return. The two business arms were consolidated into one, reducing the costs of maintaining two brands. Building local advocacy meant attending every networking event, promoting the brand and encouraging other local businesses to onsell flights to tourists in their operations. This created new business partnerships, increasing bookings.

The Impact

Alice Springs Helicopters now outsource marketing to a consultant to better handle workload. Merchandise sales doubled within the first week of changes and have increased ever since. Initially aiming for 10% merchandise growth, they have readjusted to 100% since exceeding all expectations. They began to 'sell the sizzle', updated brochures and web-sites to relay the excitement of the tourism experience. International marketing remains at 20% of all business, despite the current downturn.