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Insights from Australia's most innovative companies

in [Growing](#) by Nigel Bowen

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If anyone still needed convincing of the centrality of innovation to success in the modern business world, Apple becoming the world's most valuable company ever in mid-2012 should have settled the matter.

Unlike Apple, the companies on BRW's recently released list of the 30 most innovative Australian companies of 2012 are either little known or not usually associated with thinking outside the box. But they still have much to teach the rest of us. Here are some

lessons from three of the standout performers.

The digital video star

As well as being anointed the most innovative company in the land by BRW, ClickView also won Microsoft's Education Partner of the Year award in 2012. Despite the accolades, it hasn't developed any cutting-edge technology and doesn't even claim to be an industry leader at what it does: video streaming.

What it does do is deliver a very useful service into classrooms: a digital video box that records eight TV channels 24/7 and provides access to a library of 30,000 videos on everything from economics to biology. ClickView charges handsomely – the boxes are \$6495 and yearly subscriptions to the video library a further \$6000 – but budget-conscious principals find the money because it adds so much value to the learning process in their schools.

Innovation lesson: The businesses that succeed aren't necessarily the ones with the best technology – they're the ones who package up a host of existing technologies in a clever but accessible way in order to make people's work and/or lives easier.

Product placement perfection

When creative agency Buzz was charged with promoting Australia's favourite old-school beer, they didn't go the traditional route of branded t-shirts, bags, caps and mouse pads. No, they offered the nation's beer lovers the opportunity to purchase a VB dispensing machine for their home for \$50 (to cover the cost of freight). The end result? A truckload of free publicity and VB vending machines installed in 5000 homes across the country.

Innovation lesson: Where there's a will, there's a way to make brilliant but seemingly impossible ideas work. Realising that commercial vending technology would be prohibitively expensive, Buzz spent six months rejigging conventional domestic fridges to come up with a beer dispenser that didn't break their client's marketing budget.

Buying into other's innovations

BlueChilli is the exactly the kind of outfit you expect to see on an innovative companies list. It's a venture capital firm that has already launched 19 tech startups and plans to lift that figure to 100 by 2016. It currently has high hopes for Houzi.com, which aims to eliminate much of the paperwork involved in making and processing applications for rental properties.

Innovation lesson: No one ever said you had to come up with all the bright ideas yourself. Sometimes all you need to contribute is money and possibly guidance, then get out of the way and let an innovator you've partnered with do their thing.

Many businesses pay lip service to the idea of innovation, but only a few establish the culture and processes that make it part of their organisation's DNA. As the experiences of ClickView, Buzz and BlueChilli show, to the inventive go the spoils.

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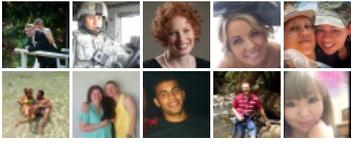
Nigel is a freelance journalist and web content provider. Over the past 15 years he has worked for many of Australia's major print media companies and written for a wide range of newspapers, magazines, trade publications and websites. Nigel most enjoys writing about entrepreneurship, popular culture, politics, social trends and small business.



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