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# Putting a spotlight on businesses that push boundaries

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**We take a look at two of last year's Telstra Business Awards winners, their journey to success, and learn about the opportunities for medium sized businesses to get recognised in 2019.**

As the popular saying goes 'you've got disrupt yourself or be disrupted'. For Nick Gulino and Francesca Pavone, owners of Dann Event Hire and winners of the Telstra Victorian Medium and Making Waves category, this was a lived reality.

## Highlights

- The Telstra Business Awards recognise how medium sized businesses have pushed boundaries to forge their path to success
- By challenging the status quo, Nick Gulino and Francesca Pavone of Dann Event Hire have turned the events industry on its head
- Penten focuses on delivering disruptive cybersecurity capability to solve tomorrow's digital challenges

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"When we first started we were young, passionate, and fearless but competition was tough. We were even paid an intimidating visit by from a competitor who told us we'd be closed down in 12 months" said Francesca.

"It gave us the ammunition we needed to succeed. We worked seven days and made huge sacrifices, wearing many hats and we juggled a small baby"

Faced with setbacks and financial pressures the business was in need of an edge to deliver new ways of winning businesses in a highly competitive industry.

To achieve this edge, Nick started to design and make his own furniture, travelling overseas to manufacturers, and manufacturing bespoke furniture and marquee designs at a low cost.

"We were able to generate a higher and faster return on investment and offer clients products they had never seen before. It was the edge we were looking for and the edge our clients needed to create the ultimate event and that wow factor" said Francesca.

The once small party hire business operating out of a 300m<sup>2</sup> premises is now one of Melbourne's most highly regarded event specialists: working with over 4,000 clients annually and employing over 150 staff, and the preferred supplier for the Australian Open four years running.

## Pushing boundaries

For Francesca and Nick raising the bar higher each year is key to their success. By putting themselves at the forefront on their industry they have helped bring to life some of Melbourne's biggest sporting events gaining international exposure.

"We see possibilities and are driven by pushing boundaries, working outside our comfort zones to create the unimagined for our client's events" said Francesca.

And in 2018 they did just that, designing and manufacturing 9,600 pieces of furniture for 36 hospitality facilities as well as being named a preferred supplier for the Australian Open four years running.

"This is a huge responsibility and one we don't take lightly. This is not a job for us, we do what we love," said Francesca.

**"We see possibilities and are driven by pushing boundaries, working outside our comfort zones to create the unimagined for our client's events".**

Francesca Pavone, Owner of Dann Event Hire

## Homegrown innovation

In this digital age cyber security is everyone's priority but for Matthew Wilson, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer at Penten, Telstra Australian Business of the Year, it's at the heart of every business decision he makes.

The Canberra-based firm provides world-leading cyber defence services to government agencies and the Australia Defence Force.

"Our organisation started with five founders and now has fifty-five employees in Canberra building products and exporting them to the world," said Matthew.

Having worked in both the security and defence sectors for over 20 years, Matthew and his co-founders recognised that current cyber security technology could not keep pace with the Australia's growing need for world-leading cyber security technology, resulting in organisations importing this technology from overseas.

"Looking to the US, UK and Israel for tools and forklifting them over to Australia when threats are moving at the pace they are - that timeframe just doesn't work anymore," said Matthew.

"We are trying to create world-leading cyber security technology here in Australia. We're not waiting for foreign governments and companies to create capabilities and bring them here.

"We focus on delivering disruptive cybersecurity capability to solve tomorrow's digital challenges. Our team can identify and solve the hard problems that others haven't been able to unlock."

## Amplifying a message

Matthew also believes that he and his colleagues have a responsibility to communicate the importance of cyber security for the nation, and explains how winning a Telstra Business Award has helped Penten do this.

"Sometimes it's very difficult to communicate to our own kids, partners and in fact the broader community the importance of the things we are doing," said Matthew.

"We looked at the Telstra Business Awards as a path to communicate, having a platform to talk about the things we need to do as a nation, to better educate and make Australia and our economy more resilient."

The Telstra Business Awards celebrate innovative businesses who are pushing boundaries and doing business differently. The program provides businesses recognition, trusted business advice and assessments, and access to the Telstra Business Awards Alumni program - a network of like-minded and leading businesses.

This year, we're recognising businesses that have shown resilience, courage and commitment to find new solutions and ways of working. We're helping deserving businesses get recognised to be 'that' business in 2019.

Recognise a business that pushes boundaries. Nominations are now open for the 2019 Telstra Business Awards

[Nominate now >](#)

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