

## Q&A: Beernuts Productions

INSIDE SMALL BUSINESS

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This week ISB spoke with gough – and this is not a typo, he is indeed gough with a small “g” – founder of independent production company Beernuts. gough lost his eyesight when he was 12 weeks old, but hasn’t let this hold him back: in 2010 gough became the first legally blind person to write, edit, produce, direct and star in a feature film.

*ISB: When, and how, did the concept of starting a film production company first come about?*

After High School I got a job making ads for a radio station, which gave me introduction to the world of production. I then moved around to the other side of the microphone, spending a number of years on the comedy circuit. During the early 2000s I toured the world doing stand-up, performing in the evening and spending the day writing not just my stand-up routines but also penning scripts for TV and films.

By 2006 I had amassed a strong body of work but none of the TV or film production companies I pitched it to were prepared to take it on. I felt that people weren't able to look beyond my perceived disability, so I determined to go and make the films and programmes myself.

*ISB: How did you fund the setting up of Beernuts*

Beernuts is entirely self-funded. I believe people tend to overcomplicate things and spend more than they need to in order to get off the ground. I spent a few thousand dollars making my first film – a 90-minute documentary about disability and mental health – and since then every new project has been funded by the income derived from its predecessor.

All our movies, TV shows, radio productions and books are only available to purchase via download from our website, and we plough the sales of each download we release back into the next one we make.

*ISB: How many people does Beernuts employ today?*

We now have four full-time employees: Amie does our marketing and PR; Simon, who previously worked for Channel 7, is my right-hand man who helps with shooting footage and sound recording; Tarsh is our make-up artist and also acts as production assistant alongside Taylor.

We employ actors and any special-effects resources we need for a specific project on a contract basis. Each film takes approx. 12 weeks in total, from casting, auditions and sourcing costumes to creating a shooting schedule then putting the film in the can and finally editing it.

*ISB: What was the single biggest challenge the faced in taking Beernuts Productions from concept to reality?*

We were confident in our ability to create the content, our challenge was marketing and PR – making people aware of the website so they buy the content. Originally, I concentrated on “old-school” marketing, and rang around media outlets telling them my story so I could get myself onto radio and TV shows. However, since Amie has come on board awareness has really taken off, primarily as a result of social-media marketing and an increase in the number of media appearances.

*ISB: And, finally, what was the most valuable lesson you have learned in launching and running Beernuts that you could pass on to those budding entrepreneurs with an idea they'd like to turn into a business?*

Back yourself – be confident in your ability and your product. The idea for the seminal Australian film, *The Castle*, was pitched to lots of different production companies and investors but nobody was interested. Undeterred, the team who came up with the concept for the film cobbled together \$750k, made the film themselves and it brought in millions at the box office.