

Winning appliances

the winning formula

Story: Gabrielle Chariton

L-R:
John Winning
Junior and John
Winning Senior

With a keen eye for trends and a knack for finding new ways to sell product, John Winning is changing the face of appliance retailing in Australia.

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Online appliance sales seems like a no-brainer now, but more than a decade ago it was an unexplored concept. Back in 2004 when a 20-year-old John Winning was working the sales floor of the hundred-year-old family business Winning Appliances, the retail model was still firmly entrenched within bricks and mortar. But the astute young salesman observed an interesting shift in consumer behaviours.

Instead of fronting up to the store to examine the kitchen and laundry appliances in person, he says, people were making their selections from printed catalogues. Realising that people don't necessarily need to see a product before making a purchasing decision, John saw an opportunity for a whole new sales avenue online. And it has really worked.

If you're one of the more than 1 million Australians who have made a purchase with Appliances Online, you'll know why it's turned the appliance retailing

sector on its head. This online-only store boasts the largest range of products, a user-friendly search function and great prices. Throw in free next-day delivery, installation, and removal of old appliances, and you're onto a winning formula. It is the easiest way to buy major home appliances like dishwashers and washing machines.

Australians have embraced online shopping in general. The *NAB Online Retail Sales Index* states that in the 12 months to January 2018, Australians clicked through \$24.7 billion worth of online purchases.

But back in 2005 it was a new concept. John Winning established Appliances Online in that year – armed with a laptop, a rented truck, a 1300 number diverted to a mobile phone, and a firm belief in the potential of e-commerce. His aim: to 'shake up the existing market' and 'offer Australians an efficient, streamlined and convenient shopping experience in an online format'.

Under John's unconventional yet perceptive leadership, Appliances Online grew steadily and today, it's Australia's largest online appliance retailer, with warehouses in most states, more than 250 employees, and a delivery reach across 95 per cent of Australia.

Following the success of his online venture, in 2011 John stepped in as fourth-generation CEO of the Winning Group, which comprises Winning Appliances, Appliances Online, clearance outlet Home Clearance, and installation and logistics company Winning Services.

Over the past seven years, John has worked to expand the Winning brand, opening new shopfronts in NSW, Queensland, WA and the ACT. He's invested heavily in transforming the in-store retail experience with the creation of three flagship 'destination style' showrooms in Redfern, NSW; Kingston, ACT; and Fortitude Valley, Queensland.

Created with an emphasis on high-end design, these state-of-the-art venues showcase the most covetable luxury products in a series of inspirational display kitchens. There's no hard sell (the sales staff don't work on commission); instead customers are given advice, guidance, and are invited to watch free cooking demonstrations to see the products in action. The buying experience in Winning showrooms is positive, aspirational, and fun – it's all about helping the consumers enjoy the process of designing and fitting out their new kitchen, laundry or bathroom.

While much of Winning's recent market success can be attributed to John's ability to intuit the purchasing experiences that today's consumers want, he's also passionate about the kitchen and bathroom sector as a whole. Winning Appliances is a member of HIA and, following a recent expansion into the commercial market, has quickly positioned itself as a leading industry supplier of quality kitchen and laundry appliances.

'The home building industry is such an important industry that impacts all Australians,' John says. 'At Winning Appliances Commercial we primarily work with major medium-density high-rise builders, project home builders, developers, architects and interior designers.' Recent projects and clients include the prestigious Sydney residential development One Central Park and leading NSW builders McDonald Jones Homes.

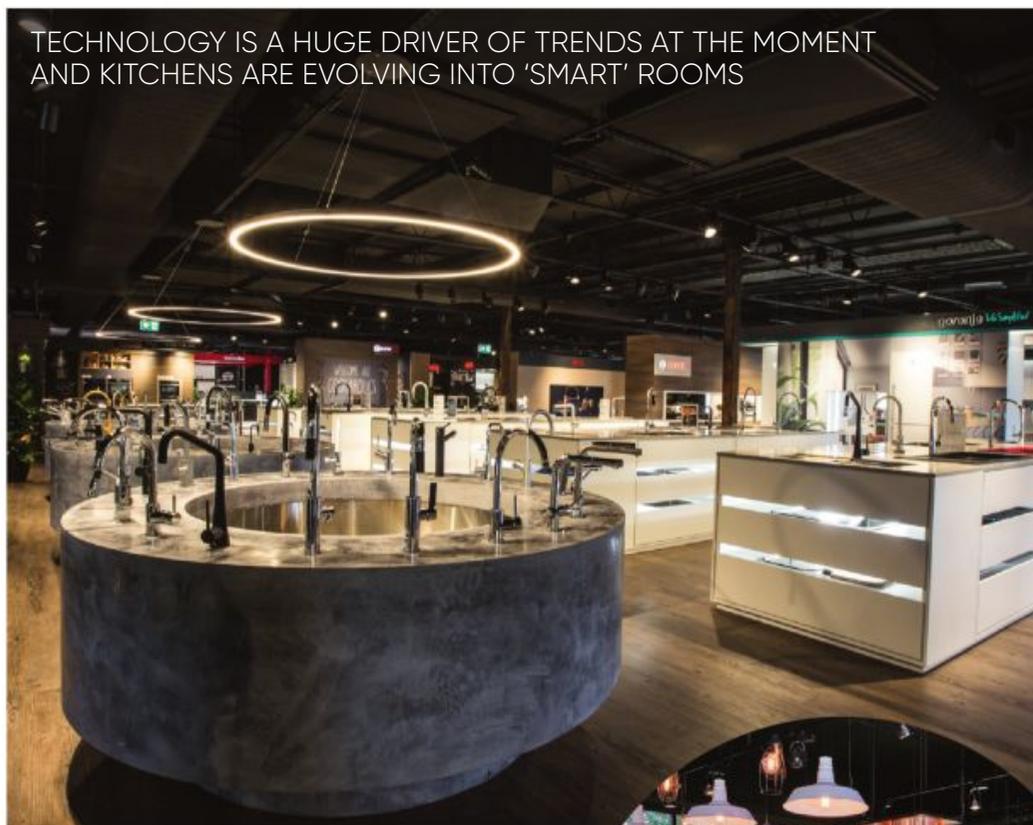
John has applied Winning's trademark customer-centric philosophy to the business's commercial operations, providing clients with a cohesive end-to-end service, covering product selection, sourcing, delivery, installation and removal.

'We have specialists who work with residential property developers and multi-res architects to help them specify products that meet the brand and budget criteria of their build,' he says.

He's focused on leading, rather than following trends, and bringing the best of international innovation to Australian homes. 'I just recently returned from EuroCucina in Milan. I was very excited by the new technology and designs that will hit Australian shores in the next 12 to 24 months.'

He says technology is a huge driver of trends at the moment; kitchens are evolving into

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'smart' rooms and the new generation high-tech appliances are set to transform the way we cook. 'There have been lots of advancements in oven technology, particularly with steam cooking, meat probes and automated programmes that take the guesswork out of cooking. The user can input the type of meat, the weight, and let the oven deliver precision results every time,' he explains.

'We're also seeing kitchen appliances being incorporated into the smart home suite. For example, Electrolux's SenseOven can be controlled from your smartphone, while the oven's "responsive glass" provides information throughout the cooking process, such as indicating which shelf is the best position to achieve optimum cooking results.'

In terms of aesthetics, John says we're about to see kitchens get a little more colourful: 'Colours are a huge trend in appliances, which help make them statement pieces in people's homes. Smeg has just launched their Portofino range, which is in a variety of bright colours. ASKO also has a new range of black finish cooktops and Siemens and Ilve have delivered a range of beautiful dark appliances.'

The Winning empire has certainly come a long way since John's great-grandfather founded it in 1906: backed by John's energy and vision, the company has expanded its reach across every segment of the appliance-purchasing market.

The lesson from this success is the importance of finding out how your customers want to do business with you, and then making that happen. 'Our aim is to impress every customer. We want to provide the customer with a fantastic experience so they come back to buy from us again and again.'

www.winning.com.au 



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