

## An exemplary business model is just the start of

*From the early days 27 years ago starting out cleaning windows to a major national facility management business today, Anthony Daniher, managing director of Danihers Facility Management, has always had a clear vision for the company's development. Together with business partner, finance director and general manager, Mark Lynch, he talks to INCLEAN about the company's history, the future and a culture providing 'passion, service and substance'.*

By Keith Watts

'Respect the people who are working for you and create work paths' is a major part of the corporate culture that Danihers promotes actively to all its staff, business units and clients. This culture of caring for its people has enabled it to retain staff and clients for many years and enjoy consistent growth.

Coming from a farming family and a well known Aussie Rules football dynasty Anthony Daniher has always been a family man, a people person and a dedicated team player. "We have a passion for what we do," he says. "People are my passion and this is a people based industry. We try to make a difference where we can and make people feel valued, wanted and appreciated. The BSCAA (Victoria) excellence awards are a great way of promoting this to the industry." Danihers' client service training and development manager, Maria Kourtesis, who has been with the company for 16 years, was acknowledged as winner of the award for Outstanding Achievement as a Manager in the 2014 awards.

The business started in 1987 as Danihers Cleaning Services and consisted of the three Daniher brothers, Anthony, Terry and Chris. Terry was already sub-contracting as a window cleaner when he was joined by his Essendon football playing brothers. "We started a cleaning company to subsidise our income because in those days footy was not a profession," shared Daniher. "It was a good job because we could control our hours and fit that in with our training."

It wasn't until 1994 that the brothers got their first cleaning contract with St. Columba's College in Essendon. "We were enthusiastic and had lots of energy but we needed regular income," he revealed. "Sister Patricia Noonan gave us our first major opportunity. We then started to employ our first team members to manage that contract."

Between 1987 and 1994 Danihers was heavily involved with the construction industry doing builders clean ups for companies such as Grocon, Multiplex and many others. During that time there was a major global financial crisis that saw a number of good quality building contractors going to the wall so Daniher decided a safer market to work in would be recurring contracts. The business grew largely through word of mouth and client referrals and Essendon Football Club came on board as a client in 1995. Brother Terry moved interstate in 1992 with football and Anthony retired from football in 1994. Chris moved back to the farm and in 1997 Anthony was running the business by himself. "That was probably the hardest two years of my life," he admits. "I realised then that I needed a business partner."

At that time Mark Lynch was general manager of the Essendon Football Club facility and joined Danihers in 1999. "I saw a young fledgling business that actually cared about the people who worked for them and cared about their clients. I felt that if they could maintain that culture then the company would grow into a really strong business," remarked Lynch.

According to Daniher, the biggest obstacle in the early days was getting the right staff. When Lynch joined it had about 120 permanent part-time staff and a full-time 'multi-purpose crew' of eight highly trained commercial cleaners. Daniher and Lynch wanted to find a way of delivering quality service by a team that could have some ownership and looked at franchising and contracting. In the end they came up with creating 'business units' where small business



The Danihers' team from left: Jeff Murray, Anthony Daniher, Mary Bowden, Lauren Andrews, Melissa Wilson, Tabatha Adams, Mark Lynch, Charlie Adams, Damien Di Cosmo and Aaron McClelland

owners and sub-contractors could run their businesses under the Danihers' banner.

"We guide them, mentor them and train them to deliver service excellence to our clients" said Daniher. "We created a career path for them and it closed one of the biggest issues we had in business, which was consistency in coal face staff. Our business units are going from strength to strength and through them we now have an exemplary service model which matches our passion and commitment. This was one of the wonderful things that Mark brought into the company and we are delighted about it." Danihers now has 500 people working for it nationally, 300 being full time.

Lynch explains that some small businesses may have good skills and training but are not so good at running their business. "On many occasions we go to their home, set up their accounting systems, invoicing and payroll systems and encourage them to go online. We also audit them and help them with time sheets and flyers to promote their businesses elsewhere."

Both Daniher and Lynch agree that the number one turning point for the company was gaining ISO 9001 Quality Assurance Certification in 1994 through sound advice from a major client, CSL Behring (a major pharmaceutical company). "That was the best thing we ever did," says Daniher. "We are still working with that client today. We are also adding sustainability and OH&S to that quality accreditation. It's all about compliance these days and that goes right through to our business units. We have a compliance manager, which is critical as we sometimes do work in dangerous environments and we want to make sure that people go home safe at night.

"Training is a very important part of what we do," says Daniher. "Without the basics you can't do the job. All our people have Certificates II, III and IV. We arm them with knowledge and that knowledge empowers our cleaners to make a difference at the coal face." The Danihers team is given regular updates on what's

## Danihers' success

happening in the industry and initiatives about sustainability. Lynch adds, "our training and development managers are critical to our organisation as they are not only training, developing and assessing what we are doing but they are also teaching our people and our clients."

All Danihers cleaning teams and facility managers are well informed of systems, procedures and policies and are given a very accurate scope of their work and job descriptions. They are also monitored. The continuous process of communication allows them to know on a daily basis about the service they are providing to the client. The company also has internal management systems and client relationship programs in place. And all client service training and development managers have tablets so that they can interact and document on the spot.

Danihers has progressed over the years from Danihers Cleaning Services and Danihers Property Services to Danihers Facility Management and has enjoyed consistent growth at a nice steady pace. "In line with our business plan over the last 10 years we have had on average a 10 to 12 percent increase in turnover each year," reveals Daniher. Lynch adds, "Strategically NSW and Queensland were a bit less but Queensland is certainly our next growth corridor. Overall, facilities is the fastest growing sector of our business. Seven years ago 100 percent of our business was cleaning and during that time facilities has grown to 37 percent of our turnover."

Daniher is also proud of the longevity of many of their clients and staff. "Our clients have taught us so much," he admits. "We have ridden a beautiful journey together." It is that culture that Daniher believes makes the company unique. "When things align with the right client we build a fantastic relationship which is special. We pride ourselves on being a leader in sustainability." Mark agrees and adds, "We deal with like-minded companies who have the same passion for the environment that we have and the same values – passion, service and substance."

[www.danihers.com.au](http://www.danihers.com.au)

## March/April INCLEAN 2015

**Focuses: • Training • Purchasing**

The March/April issue will look at how registered training organisations and their clients are surviving with the cut of industry funds and what solutions contractors have adopted to upskill and train their staff. We also look at how the industry associations are assisting in this area to maintain a professional workforce with continued training opportunities using online training.

Ongoing cleaning and hygiene product innovation means service provider purchasing executives are being offered genuine labour-saving processes that demand their constant investigation. Together with a proliferation of web-based supply organisations, complemented by new supply 'players', the purchasing role has become a multifaceted sector of our industry. We delve into these issues and ask suppliers and distributors for their views.

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