

Brisbane, Queensland

## CYBERDREAMING



Brett Leavy is owner and Managing Director of *CyberDreaming*. He created the company in 1998 with the vision of meeting the multimedia needs and opportunities of Indigenous people throughout Australia. Brett is committed to both providing a quality marketplace service and bringing tangible benefits to the Indigenous community. The company has also provided employment and training within the industry to Indigenous people, both as direct employees and contractors. *CyberDreaming* is currently working on a major project that will see the Indigenous culture and history preserved and presented in a unique interactive way to the wider Australian community.

## The Story So Far . . .

Brett describes *CyberDreaming* as -‘A uniquely Australian multimedia company that develops interactive website and multimedia projects, along with media and communications campaigns targeted towards an Indigenous marketplace.’ During its seven year life, *CyberDreaming* has developed over 140 websites and CD-ROMs for a variety of Indigenous organisations.

*CyberDreaming* was incubated through the assistance of the School of Communication Design, Queensland University of Technology. In the early stages of business formation, Brett spoke to over 100 people within Government and business seeking advice, direction and information. He applied for over 20 grants of various sizes, but was unsuccessful with every application. The simple message from all these groups was - ‘Your business is not viable.’ However, he remained undaunted and faithful to his dream and vision. He

launched his company, struggling with cash flow and relying on contracts lasting from three days to eight weeks. He reviewed his business plan every three months to keep track of the business's development and direction.

In the late 1990's, shortly after the business had started, the information technology industry experienced a worldwide crash. Many companies were forced to fold. At the time, Brett felt if the business could survive this industry challenge, the future would be viable. While Brett attributes the survival of the company to luck, it was primarily due to Brett's passion, determination and hard work in establishing *CyberDreaming* in the marketplace.

The expansion of *CyberDreaming* has meant challenges for Brett. His role within the company changed. Brett explains - *'As the company grew I employed more staff, I found the evolution to managing more than three staff difficult. I had to take on a supervisory role and stop being so hands on. I felt like I was constantly watching over people's shoulders - and I hate it when people watch over my shoulder. As profits increased the machinations of the company changed. I began using contractors which was beneficial to the evolving nature of the company. I could utilise people with specialist skills and manage the projects from afar.'*



*Brett Leavy*

## The Impact

*CyberDreaming* has become an important and consistent provider of employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people with a passion for the multimedia industry. The company utilises five or more contractors at any one time, depending on its work load. In the past, *CyberDreaming* has provided full time and part time positions. Those previously employed by the company are still retained as contractors. They have been able to expand their own clientele and increase their own opportunities within the industry due to the knowledge and experience gained working in *CyberDreaming*.

## Building The Future Through Enterprise – Stories of Successful Enterprises and Entrepreneurs

*CyberDreaming's* contribution to the development and promotion of Indigenous culture is significant. Brett's original dream envisioned a company that embraced and fostered expression of Indigenous culture for Indigenous people. *CyberDreaming* educates communities on the potential of the internet and information technology and has played a significant role in increasing the use of multimedia by Indigenous people. Brett explains the company's services to the community - *'We see our products and services as an important tool to engage with the community. We assist with the restoration, education, retention, distribution and continuing maintenance of Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge. CyberDreaming seeks to promote understanding and acceptance of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous people within the broader community using the tools of new media technology.'*

Through educating communities and individuals on the potential of the internet, *CyberDreaming* seeks to increase the capacity and passion of young Indigenous people. By designing websites and CD-ROMS that are not only interesting and informative, but distinctive and cutting edge, Indigenous identity is expressed in a modern way that young people relate to. *CyberDreaming* assists young people to understand more about their culture and identity. Brett explains - *'Helping young people know more about their community helps them to explore their identity. Knowing who you are and where you come from enables you to have pride. Having pride and self awareness gives the increased capacity to not deal with problems destructively.'*

Currently, *CyberDreaming* is amalgamating with various companies on a project that will change the way people learn about Indigenous culture. As Brett outlines - *'CyberDreaming is working towards creating a virtual world that documents, preserves and reports the history, culture and knowledge of the Indigenous people. We are creating a computer program that is interactive - it is like the computer game - "The Sims" - only much more sophisticated and with photo quality graphics. Through it, you enter a virtual world, where you can interact with Indigenous communities, learning from them their connections with the land, knowledge and kin.'* The software will deliver real knowledge and experience to

both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Brett believes that through cultural understanding, stereotypes and barriers within the community can be eliminated.

## Success Factors

Six factors stand out for Brett as the basic causes for the success of *CyberDreaming*.

### *Determination*

Brett experienced many setbacks during the initial phases of his business especially related to the lack of capital, not being unable to access loans or grants and continual cash flow problems. Brett remained determined, continuing to slowly build the business, contract by contract. Brett's says – *'Many times I have been told that things can not be done. I did not accept these opinions until I had researched the situation and decided for myself.'*

### *Knowledge and Education*



*CyberDreaming's work for Moree Plains Shire Council*

Brett has been a continual learner and strongly believes in the value, knowledge and experiences that education brings. Brett confesses – *'I don't really consider myself to be that smart, but I believe you should always be open to learning new things.'* Brett undertook a Bachelor of International Business and a Diploma in Teaching at university. However, he saw the potential business sense in also studying history, geography and Korean. Not all of the people employed by *CyberDreaming* have completed formal training, but Brett ensures that they all have a passion to learn and gain new experiences.

### ***Malleability***

Brett explains this new word - *'Malleable means moulding and changing the shape of something. Malleability as a success factor means, 'being able to adjust and change the business according to its direction and opportunities. My business changes continuously. You must always be assessing the direction you are headed in, the outcomes that are practical for the business to achieve and what your personal goals are.'*

#### **SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Determination
- Knowledge & Education
- Malleability
- Action Planning
- Ambition
- Business Values

### ***Action Planning***

The nature of the information technology industry ensures that at any one time, Brett is simultaneously juggling two or three contracts. Having all of the projects completed to his high standard, requires him to be actively planning at each step. Planning is a challenging process, but as Brett says - *'Managing the little things can be frustrating and time consuming, but I often find it is in the little things that I find my strengths.'*

### ***Ambition***

Brett openly admits that although business planning is a major success factor, the goals he sets for himself are rarely achievable. Brett explains - *'I find setting big goals highly motivating. I may never fulfil all my bigger goals, but I can certainly see myself and the business moving towards them. You need to aim high.'*

### *Business Values*

*CyberDreaming* has adopted the following charter to shape the values of the business, and express the company's commitment to the Indigenous people they seek to represent -

- *'CyberDreaming's vision is to provide all Indigenous people in all communities with access to innovative and exciting communication design services.*
- *We aim is to provide multimedia products and services that help to inform, educate and entertain whilst reflecting the cultures and protocols of Australia's Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.*
- *CyberDreaming sees Internet services as an important means by which our communities can restore, retain and continue to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, arts, culture and heritage and in recognition of the autonomy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their diverse creative and cultural resources. We seek appropriate channels to incorporate arts, culture and heritage into all that we do.*
- *For as long as possible, CyberDreaming seeks to contribute to the diversity of Australian Multimedia Industry, particularly through innovative and dynamic online applications that give a broader understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture.'*

## **Advice to other Indigenous people contemplating the enterprise option**

Brett simply advises – *'Study what you are interested in. Understand your competitors, but also your own limitations. Surround yourself with people who are determined and focused, draw on them for experience and guidance.'*

## For Further Information

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