



BRW

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## Ecowash Mobile

Car-wash franchise Ecowash has minimised its property costs quite simply – it doesn't have any. Its franchisees work from home, as does its management team: operations director Stewart Nicholls and managing director Jim Cornish, both based in Sydney.

The company has outsourced its warehousing to a logistics centre at Castle Hill, in north-western Sydney, which has the flexibility to provide the engine-room for the business, specialising in “water-free” car washing.

Costs for the Castle Hill property are charged on a “per pick” rate, which means costs increase as the business grows and more products are needed.

Cornish says of the proprietors of the Castle Hill centre: “We've had a strong relationship with them from day one. It's like they're part of the company.” Ecowash also uses space in the centre for franchisee training.

Nicholls and Cornish are canny users of their alliance partners and public space to conduct their business. The pair meet franchisees in cafes, which keeps the atmosphere relaxed. They have the use of boardrooms at their accountants' offices and, through an agreement with Hyundai, use its offices when they travel interstate.

Dean Sappey: 'The challenging thing when you're a fast-growing company is how much space you'll need in three years'

Nicholls says the decision not to have a dedicated office for the business was based mostly on practicality; cost was a secondary concern. “We'd rather put the money into the business and grow the business rather than feel warm and fuzzy about property,” he says.

Even so, the savings are not to be dismissed. Cornish estimates the company is saving up to \$12,000 a month by not having office premises in the states in which it operates. Of his and Nicholls' home-office set-ups, he says: “They're pretty flash home offices. I used to work in corporate. They're better than any I had. If we had a dedicated office, nobody would be there. It would be just a complete waste of franchisees' money.”

Nicholls agrees. “In the beginning, we did look at all options,” he says. “We were close to doing



JIM RICE

Jim Cornish, left, and Stewart Nicholls: 'We'd rather put the money into the business and grow the business rather than feel warm and fuzzy about property'