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Australian online wine retailer Vinomofu goes global

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Two Australian brothers-in-law are successfully disrupting the competitive retail wine market at home. Now they're ready to take their Australian business model – and wine – to the world.

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Christmas is a creative time of year for Justin Dry.

When he was 14 years old, he started a business selling Christmas trees. And it was while celebrating Christmas with his family in 2006 that he told his brother-in-law Andre Eikmeier about another great idea.

He wondered if it was possible to create a website that combined the kind of community that Facebook fostered... with a specific focus on wine?

As Dry was explaining the concept, a strange look came over his brother-in-law's face.

Eikmeier dragged Dry out to the garage, switched on his computer and showed him a half-built website dedicated to wine.

“It was called Red Cellar and was basically customer reviews on wine,” says Dry. “We’d been thinking almost exactly the same thing!”

These ideas merged to become Qwoff in 2007 – a community-based wine website. Dry and Eikmeier ran Qwoff for four years, but by the time Christmas 2010 came around, Dry had another bright idea that would see Qwoff become Vinomofu.

Fast-forward to 2016 and Vinomofu has become a successful, online wine retailing business, which turns over more than A\$50 million a year and is on the cusp of going global.

Democratising wine

Launched in April 2011, Vinomofu has a proud ethos of only selling wines they love – ‘if we don’t love it, we don’t sell it’. Since launching, they have grown a 500,000-strong membership base from Australia and around the world.

“We wanted to democratise wine, bring it to everyone and make it approachable,” says Dry.

“We don’t believe in intimidation or elitism as some in the wine industry do. We’ve created a super-curated list of wine for our customers that gives us the focus and buying power to win against even the biggest retailers. We focus on 5 per cent of the already niche premium wine market.”

Vinomofu features new wines from Australia and the world on its site every day, offering them at exceptional prices. Those wines only last until they sell out... which is sometimes less than 10 minutes.

For small, premium Australian producers, Vinomofu's global reach is good for business. These producers are often stretched in terms of developing their business potential and don't have huge marketing budgets.

Dry, who studied wine marketing, says Australian producers are making fantastic wine that is worth sharing with the world.

"When we purchase their wine, we ask if they want to be part of our global market push," he says. "It's an exciting proposition for them because we're building a global demand for their wine."



Vinomofu team members in their Melbourne office.

From Qwoff to Vinomofu

Before launching Vinomofu, Dry and Eikmeier ran Qwoff, a smaller company that combined digital marketing, a community-based website featuring wine reviews and recommendations, plus a YouTube series that saw them travelling to some of Australia's most exciting wine regions.

In hindsight, Dry says, Qwoff helped them establish a strong support base, as well as rapport with the small and medium-sized wine producers they work with today.

They had just a handful of staff when Qwoff transitioned into Vinomofu. Today they employ a happy bunch of 120 people at their Melbourne headquarters.

In 2012, Catch of the Day, a successful Australian daily-deals website, purchased a 70 per cent share of Vinomofu. But Dry and Eikmeier believed Vinomofu's potential wasn't being met. In 2013 they bought Vinomofu back with the help of Adelaide-based angel investors.

That year, and every year since, they have grown the business by more than 50 per cent and in 2016 they

expect to sell some half a million cases of wine.
Vinomofu team member packs a case of wine for a customer.

In an exciting development for the Vinomofu team, some of those cases will now be sold into overseas markets.

Online wine pop-ups around the world



Vinomofu team member packs a case of wine for a customer.

In April 2016, Vinomofu secured an Australian record-breaking A\$25 million investment from venture capital firm Blue Sky Ventures. This funding will allow Vinomofu to expand rapidly.

“The way we expand into global markets is going to be quite different,” says Dry.

He calls it the ‘lite’ version of Vinomofu – an online pop-up store. The idea is to curate a list of wines tailored to each market, pack them in a container and ship them to the country. They’ll then launch their Vinomofu online pop-up store and work with local logistics and marketing partners to get the wine to customers.

The six markets Vinomofu will initially launch in are New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, the US, UK and China.

“We’ve always been interested in the China market,” says Dry. “There’s huge potential for growth in the wine market there. Wine education has always been part of the Vinomofu offering, and the Chinese wine market really demands that.”

Vinomofu has already launched its online pop-up store in New Zealand with huge success.

“We want to have a global presence,” Dry adds. “We think our way is the best way to buy wine and we want to take this to international markets.”

Find out more at [Vinomofo](https://www.vinomofo.com).



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