

ONE of ex-US President George W. Bush's notable quotes was that, "The French don't have a word for entrepreneur". The Australian vocabulary doesn't have an alternative version, and, while that word is recognised for its French origins, Aussies are quite content to use it when describing someone prepared to take a business risk and put their own skill and expertise on the line.

It's more than acceptable to put Fijian-born Fred Mohammed in the category of entrepreneur. As managing director of Crane Trucks R Us and its sister company Tranzhire R Us, he now controls a business specialising in crane trucks of all sizes for hire with an operator, or a fleet of trucks and trailers for medium to long-term dry hire.

Fred certainly started from basic beginnings, with a stint as a 14-year-old behind the counter at a local McDonalds. His first full-time job in 1994 was learning a trade in the

print industry, which was then followed by trying his hand at plumbing. Neither of these occupations tempted Fred as a long-term career, and by 2003 he was experimenting with a small courier business.

"My father had passed away when I was ten years old and my Mum was faced with raising the family on her own. I felt responsible for doing my best for the family and so I was always looking for something that I could do that would help out as much as possible," said Fred.

"In March 2004 I had the opportunity to put a courier truck in work in the Brisbane area. I managed to get finance to buy a used truck and was able to get that off the ground. The business grew and I was able to add a second truck. I continued to grow the business and by 2006 we were getting recognised for the way we presented our vehicles. Having a good presentation level showed how we respected our clients as well as our own business.

"By 2006 we were operating five trucks and we gained a contract that required us to expand rapidly. Then the GFC hit and business just lost confidence. There was I at the start of 2009 with four new trucks and a finance loan for \$1.2 million and a contract that didn't materialise.

"Finding new work came from having been very particular about the way we ran our business and presented our fleet. Fortunately we were able to regain our momentum by winning new work in 2009 when the airport link came into being in Brisbane," added Fred.

The Global Financial Crisis became the catalyst for Fred Mohammed to review his business and determine a path for controlled future expansion. Up until 2009 Fred's courier business had been named HYPO after the Hypo 31 Nissan Skyline, which became an iconic sports car amongst young buyers. Developing a business plan that would enable the business to continue to grow highlighted the unsuitability of the name in conveying the identity of the business to potential customers.

"At that stage we were using the company name of HYPO CT, with the CT relating to crane trucks. Although I might have thought the name was pretty cool, I realised that nobody else understood it or could connect the name to the business.

"I got the idea of rebranding the business to Crane Trucks R Us from my apprenticeship with Plumbers R Us. I guess that, to be successful, you have to be a bit of a risk taker. The incentive for me to aim for success came from when my father passed away and I became the main breadwinner. I don't smoke or drink, largely as I never had time to start, and I had to earn money.

"As work became available, I bought more trucks to match the job opportunities. Winning the contract for the airport link meant getting the name out there. It also made us realise there were other opportunities, and in 2012 we registered Tranzhire R US, which is our hire division," said Fred.

Rapid expansion over a tight timeframe can bring concerns over possibly losing control over business procedures, but as Fred Mohammed has grown his business he has also put the structure in place to maintain growth and focus.

From one truck operating in Brisbane, the company has grown to now operate over 200 pieces of equipment from depots in Brisbane, Sydney, Townsville, Rockhampton, Perth and Melbourne.

"I can worry that we are moving too fast, but then if I wasn't in the game we would have missed out on that work. It's challenging, but we have to spread our interest over the country," said Fred.

FRED MOHAMMED

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

A CHANGE OF BRAND IDENTITY LED MAJOR GROWTH — WORDS AND IMAGES BY CHRIS MULLETT.



PROFILE



"I am now employing over 80 people. I need to consolidate now on our position, but there are still some contracts coming up for tender in Victoria we need to look at. We are also currently looking at overseas opportunities with the potential for international contracts such as Asia and possibly PNG. That could result in our establishing a satellite operation in Thailand," said Fred.

The equipment list currently available through Crane Trucks R Us and Tranzhire R Us is impressive, with new Volvo, DAF and MAN prime movers and rigid trucks, as well as a range of trailers. Palfinger cranes are used universally throughout the fleet.

"We hire specialised gear through Tranzhire R Us with 4x4 crane trucks, tilt trays with cranes, drop-deck and extendible trailers, the option of MAN 8x8 all-wheel-drive rigid trucks, plus the fitment of Roll Over Protection (ROPS). We dry hire and most contracts are for 12 months. It splits the business up into different sections to suit the different needs of the industry," said Fred.

CAPTION HERE

"The tilt trays are designed by South East QLD Tilt Trays and the dog trailers are by Sheppard. If a company requires generators or containers we would supply them.

"Being able to supply anything that a customer wants actually enables us to grow our business in any area that we see developing. We want to get more into project management in the future and expand also into storage opportunities.

"Every piece of equipment we have is GPS tracked and monitored. Every appliance, even company cars, anything with tyres, has got GPS tracking through Pinpoint Communication systems, so I can see where everything is," said Fred. 

