

Gelatissimo

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REGIONAL CASE STUDY

GARY WILSON'S JOURNEY:
ACHIEVING REGIONAL SUCCESS WITH FRESH GELATO
AND DEEP COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS.

SYNOPSIS

From a career in aviation to business ownership, Gary Wilson's journey highlights resilience, community engagement & strategic growth in building Gelatissimo Toowoomba into a thriving business.

This case study explores Gary Wilson's transition from a distinguished career in aviation to becoming a successful Gelatissimo franchisee in Toowoomba. Drawn to the city's vibrant community, excellent schools, and strategic location, Gary saw an opportunity to introduce a premium gelato experience. Inspired by a visit to a Gelatissimo store in Coolangatta, he opened his franchise in 2012, leveraging his meticulous approach and strong business acumen.

Gary's success can be attributed to his deep community engagement, strategic marketing, and dedication to exceptional customer service. Despite challenges such as the expansion of a local shopping centre and the COVID-19 pandemic, Gary's ability to adapt and innovate ensured continuous growth and success for Gelatissimo Toowoomba. This case study highlights Gary's key strategies, including community sponsorships, staff training, and seasonal product adaptations, offering valuable insights for other regional franchise partners. Gary's story is a testament to the power of resilience, community connection, and the pursuit of excellence in building a successful business.



MEET GARY WILSON

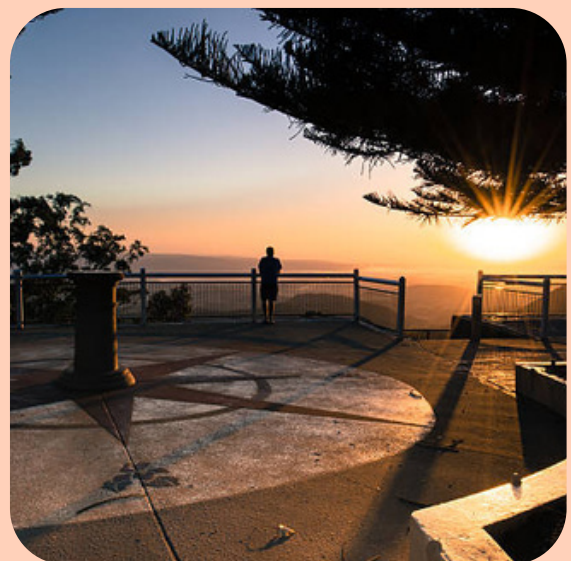
A CAREER IN AVIATION

Gary has had a remarkable career spanning 45+ years in Australian Aviation, primarily within the Military and Civilian Air Traffic Management domains. His roles included Air Traffic Controller, Aviation Safety Manager, Aviation Training Manager and ATC Instructor, among others. Gary's extensive experience also encompasses Defence Capability Development and Aviation Project Management, working with regulatory bodies including Defence Aviation Safety Authority & the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.



CONNECTION TO TOOWOOMBA

Gary has been connected to the Toowoomba community for over 45 years, beginning with his employment at the Oakey Army Aviation Centre. Despite various relocations due to his career, Gary always found his way back to Toowoomba, drawn by its vibrant community, natural environment, excellent schools, and affordable property prices. The city's strategic location near Brisbane and its potential for business growth further solidified Gary's decision to make Toowoomba his home.



INITIAL ATTRACTION TO GELATISSIMO

Gary's journey with Gelatissimo began during a family holiday in Coolangatta in 2011, where the vibrant store and mouth-watering gelato left a lasting impression. Recognising the potential for such a business in Toowoomba, Gary reached out to Gelatissimo and secured the Toowoomba franchise opportunity, opening the store in September 2012.



TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

Sometimes, it may not be immediately apparent how the strengths and skills acquired in one career can be transferable to another. Here, we take a look at Gary's career in aviation within the Military and Civilian Air Traffic Management and how these skills have complemented the building and sustainment of his Gelatissimo franchise.

STRUCTURE

Military training instilled a high level of discipline and adherence to procedures, which is crucial for roles in aviation safety and air traffic management.

This has translated to consistent and efficient store operations, adherence to schedules, and maintenance of high standards in product quality and service.

LEADERSHIP

Experience in managerial roles, including training & operational management, established strong leadership & the ability to manage & motivate teams.

This translated to effective recruitment, training & management of staff, fostering a motivated & high-performing team that delivers excellent customer service.

PRECISION

Managing air traffic and ensuring operational safety compliance required meticulous attention to regulatory procedures, detail and precision.

This translated to meticulous attention to store presentation, product offerings, and customer interactions, leading to a superior customer experience.

COMMUNICATION

Clear and effective communication is essential in aviation to ensure safety and coordination between different parties.

This translated to clear and effective communication with staff, customers, and suppliers, enhancing teamwork, customer satisfaction, and business relationships.

COMPLIANCE

In-depth understanding of regulatory compliance and standards are crucial for roles involving safety management and project oversight.

This translated to a focus on compliance with food safety regulations, health standards, & business laws, protecting the business from legal issues and building trust with customers.

INGENUITY

Handling complex situations in air traffic control and aviation safety required excellent problem-solving abilities and quick decision-making skills.

This translated to efficient resolution of operational issues, customer complaints, and strategic business challenges, contributing to smooth and successful store management.

ADAPTABILITY

The ability to adapt to different roles and environments, as evidenced by Gary's diverse assignments and geographic relocations.

This translated to quick and effective responses to market changes, customer preferences, and unexpected challenges, ensuring the business remains resilient and competitive.

GARY'S GROWTH STRATEGIES

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS

Gary's confidence in Gelatissimo's success in Toowoomba was influenced by several factors:

ABSENCE OF A PREMIUM GELATO OFFERING IN THE CITY.

Before Gelatissimo, Toowoomba lacked a high-quality, premium gelato option. The existing market was primarily served by traditional ice cream shops, which left a gap for a more upscale, authentic gelato experience. Gary recognised this opportunity to introduce a unique product that could stand out and attract customers seeking a premium dessert experience.

THE APPEALING BRANDING AND VISUAL ENERGY OF GELATISSIMO.

The vibrant and visually appealing branding of Gelatissimo, with its colourful gelato displays and inviting store design, plays a crucial role in drawing in customers. The aesthetic appeal of the store creates a pleasant and enticing atmosphere that enhances the overall customer experience, making it a popular destination.

STRATEGIC LOCATION ON CORNER OF MAIN THOROUGHFARE

Securing a prime location at a busy intersection in the heart of Toowoomba's CBD provided high visibility and accessibility. This location benefits from substantial foot traffic and is easily accessible to both locals and visitors, making it an ideal spot to attract a steady stream of customers.



COMMUNITY & BRAND AWARENESS

From the beginning, Gary understood the importance of connecting with the local community. His strategy involved:

SUPPORTING & SPONSORING LOCAL COMMUNITY EVENTS.

Gary actively sponsored and supported various local organisations and events, such as the Rangeville Hockey Club, Empire Theatre productions, cancer fundraising activities and the annual Christmas Wonderland event. This support not only provided valuable resources to these groups but also positioned Gelatissimo as a community-oriented business, fostering goodwill and positive associations with the brand.

PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY EVENTS

By taking part in major local events, Gary ensured Gelatissimo maintained a visible presence within the community. These events attract large crowds and offer excellent opportunities for brand exposure. For instance, creating a unique gelato flavour for the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers and offering discounts during the event helped attract families and visitors, enhancing brand recognition and loyalty.

ENGAGING WITH SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY EVENTS TO BUILD LOYALTY

Gary's involvement with local schools through sponsorships, participation in school fetes, and support for community events helped establish Gelatissimo as a familiar and trusted brand. These engagements created positive relationships with local families and young customers, building a loyal customer base that supports the business through word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat visits.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:

Gary joined the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce early on, recognising the importance of networking and staying connected with the local business community. Through his active participation, he was able to share insights, gain valuable advice, and stay informed about local economic trends and opportunities. His commitment to community led to Gelatissimo Toowoomba winning 'Best New Business' including division finalist in the 'Hospitality' Category in the Chamber's Business Excellence Awards in 2013 and again becoming a finalist in the 'Hospitality' Category in 2023.



GARY'S DEDICATION AND LEADERSHIP WERE FURTHER RECOGNISED WHEN HE WAS APPOINTED AS A BOARD MEMBER OF THE TOOWOOMBA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN DECEMBER 2023. IN THIS ROLE, HE CONTINUES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY BY HELPING TO SHAPE POLICIES, SUPPORT FELLOW BUSINESS OWNERS, AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE REGION. HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHAMBER NOT ONLY BENEFITS GELATISSIMO BUT ALSO ENHANCES HIS INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, REINFORCING GELATISSIMO'S POSITION AS A KEY PLAYER IN TOOWOOMBA'S BUSINESS LANDSCAPE.

CHALLENGES & ADAPTATIONS

OVERCOMING MARKET DISRUPTIONS

One significant challenge was the expansion of the Toowoomba Grand Central Shopping Centre, which impacted foot traffic in the CBD.

When the Toowoomba Grand Central Shopping Centre underwent a major expansion and reopened in 2017, it attracted a significant portion of the foot traffic that previously frequented the CBD street precinct. This shift posed a substantial challenge for Gelatissimo Toowoomba, as the reduced pedestrian flow threatened the store's customer base and sales volume. Many CBD businesses struggled, and some even closed or relocated to the new shopping centre.

Gary overcame this by strengthening community connections and continuously adapting to market changes.

Understanding the critical need to draw customers back to the CBD, Gary intensified his community engagement efforts. He increased his participation in local events, sponsored more community activities, and enhanced his marketing strategies to remind locals of the value and uniqueness Gelatissimo offered. These efforts included special promotions, creating exclusive gelato flavours for the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers and partnering with nearby businesses to create mutual benefits and drive foot traffic.

Additionally, Gary focused on improving the in-store experience to make it more attractive and inviting. He invested in refurbishments in 2015, 2020 and Oct 2023 and ensured that the store's ambiance reflected the premium quality of Gelatissimo's products. This revitalised environment helped retain existing customers and attract new ones despite the competitive pressure from the shopping centre.



ADAPTING TO SEASONALITY

Toowoomba's climate, characterised by distinct seasonal variations, presents both opportunities and challenges for a business like Gelatissimo.

During the hot summers, the demand for refreshing gelato peaks, driving strong sales and customer traffic. Conversely, the cooler winter months can see a dip in demand for cold treats. Gary adapts to these seasonal fluctuations by diversifying his product offerings to suit the changing weather. In the colder months, he more actively promotes warm, comforting options such as hot chocolate, barista-crafted coffee, and warm desserts like hot waffles and hot brownies paired with customer choice of gelato. This strategy not only maintains steady foot traffic but also ensures that Gelatissimo remains a favourite destination for a wide range of treats year-round. Additionally, Gary leverages marketing campaigns to highlight these seasonal offerings, keeping the menu exciting and relevant. By continuously innovating and responding to the seasonal needs of his customers, Gary effectively balances the ebb and flow of demand, ensuring consistent business performance throughout the year.

BRAND TRANSFORMATION AND IMPACT

In late 2023-24, the Gelatissimo brand underwent a significant brand transformation. When Gary implemented the required changes at Gelatissimo Toowoomba, he saw a notable improvement in the business, boosting sales and reinforcing community relationships.

The modern, premium store aesthetic, featuring updated interiors, new furniture, and striking displays, has been well-received by customers, enhancing their experience and aligning with the high-quality gelato offerings. The refreshed design creates a welcoming environment that attracts new customers and encourages repeat visits, while efficient layout changes have streamlined customer flow and improved service efficiency.

This transformation has also strengthened Gelatissimo's community presence, making the store a popular spot for local events and gatherings. The revitalized image has boosted foot traffic and increased customer engagement on social media, as satisfied patrons share their positive experiences. Gelatissimo Toowoomba's successful brand overhaul highlights the significant impact of thoughtful design and community connection on business growth.

GARY'S INSIGHTS FOR FUTURE FRANCHISE PARTNERS

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

Opening a Gelatissimo in a regional town offers several compelling advantages that set it apart from other businesses. Gelatissimo's premium gelato product and strong brand presence provide a unique and high-quality offering that often lacks competition in regional markets. Gary's store in Toowoomba is a prime example of this advantage, where the combination of exceptional gelato flavours and premium customer service creates a distinct competitive edge.

ADVICE FOR POTENTIAL FRANCHISEES

Gary advises potential franchisees in regional towns to:

- Focus on community engagement and building strong local connections.
- Provide outstanding customer service consistently.
- Be prepared for hard work and dedication over an extended period to achieve solid results.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Being part of the Gelatissimo franchise network offers significant advantages, including brand recognition and a proven business model. However, Gary emphasises the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to suit the unique dynamics of a regional city.

GARY WILSON'S JOURNEY WITH GELATISSIMO TOOWOOMBA SHOWCASES THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, ADAPTABILITY, AND A STRONG BRAND PRESENCE. HIS DEDICATION TO CONNECTING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE HAS BEEN KEY TO HIS STORE'S SUCCESS. GARY'S EXPERIENCE SERVES AS AN INSPIRATION TO OTHER REGIONAL FRANCHISE PARTNERS, DEMONSTRATING THAT WITH THE RIGHT STRATEGIES AND COMMITMENT, SUCCESS IS ATTAINABLE.

Gelatissimo

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