

# the franchise review

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as an accelerator

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The Core of one  
franchise success

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Make sure it's  
what you want

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FRANCHISE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA



# Mateship and leadership at the core of a franchise success

Half-way through a 730km wilderness adventure race in the darkest recesses of the Tasmanian jungle, Craig Arnold's body was shutting down. Leader of a handpicked, four-man, special forces team, in only his second adventure race, Craig was green to the gills, he couldn't control his bodily functions, he was blacking out and his speech was slurred.

This was meant to be the race that set his team up for a crack at the world titles, but unbeknownst to himself and his three companions, Craig was literally drowning himself with water consumption.

The condition is called hyponatremia and on a 36-degree day, the water intake from streams and rivulets was about to condemn Craig's team to a near-certain disqualification.

It was then he called for and positioned teammates around him – one in front of him and the other with his guiding hand on Craig's backpack. They talked him through the basic motor skills of walking ... "and left, and right, and left and right, keep going mate".

As they reached a hut, Craig, barely audible, advocated for two-hour break with his teammates who had already sent for race medics.

"All I can remember saying to them was, 'Give me two hours and I'll be good to go. Our primary objective was to finish as a fully ranked team of four, our second

objective was to do it in the quickest time possible," Craig recalls.

When the search and rescue team located the hut, they came with food, water and medical supplies. "I denied their help, I knew that if I accepted it, we'd be disqualified.

After a rest, Craig made good on his promise and rejoined the race. Things were going much better until 14km from the finish line.

At that point, Craig's teammate went down, unconscious and unable to take in food or water. The team was then faced with a 300-foot abseil – a task made nearly impossible with an unresponsive teammate.

Race guidelines dictate that teammates should stay within 100 metres of each other given the treacherous conditions. As leader, Craig had a decision to make. Instinct got the better of him and he broke from his teammates to run 14km into town to get a shopping trolley and space blanket.

No mountain high enough: Craig Arnold reaches the summit in Patagonia after a 36-day expedition crossing the ice cap.



◀ **A personalised invite: Craig and Jason are pictured with His Excellency General, The Honourable David Hurley AC DSCR (Retired) Governor of NSW in recognition for making a positive impact and change via business. The recognition was part of the ‘Prince’s Trust – lead your own business program’.**

They made the finish line. Their ingenuity was rewarded with a berth at the world titles.

More importantly, their pact to finish as a team of four was honoured.

Craig, and his spiritual brother, Jason Dolan, have incorporated that kind of leadership and direction into the business model at the Core9 fitness centres they have founded.

Jason, himself, is an elite leader – he has been an integral member with some of the highest DNA in the Australian military ranks.

He has seen active duty in Iraq, served with the 4RAR Commando and Special Forces Tactical Assault Units and has been assigned to personal security detachments for top government officials.

As part of the International Coalition Against Terrorism, he was part of Australia’s very last line of defence against the world’s most notorious terrorists.

When Craig spoke about Jason, who he rates as a mentor and inspiration, he pauses to amplify the significance of his statement.

“How can I say this strongly enough ... Jason has the ability to get the job done .... No matter what that job is,” Craig said.

“He might not always have the answers, but he is always in the trenches. ALWAYS first into the trenches.”

Jason laughed: “I’m kinda not the sort of guy who will sit around and twiddle thumbs with you or do small talk, but if you’re going to war, you’re going to want me on your team.”

Now they are leading around 300 members through a purpose-built fitness regime that is sweeping across the nation, and will no doubt go global.

Core9 centres provide a 31-minute workout where you have a personal

trainer stepping you through the program three-and-a-half minutes after you arrive – no need for class timetables, bookings or running late to scheduled appointments.

The workout uses proven training methods mixed with gymnastics, kickboxing and military exercise techniques.

“In life, and with goal setting, there is a starting point and a finish line,” Craig said. “We give people direction, a start and a visible finish line and checkpoints along the journey.”

“You mightn’t always know where the finish line is, but all you need to know and believe is it’s only a matter of time before you get there. You’ve got to know that and believe it wholeheartedly.”

They founded the business at a garage meeting in Craig’s backyard around six years ago.

The founders say the idea and dream were clear in mind, it was all about adding “systemisation, efficiency and scalability”



**Last line of defence: Jason Dolan during his time in Tactical Assault Group East (TAGE). Jason believes leaders don’t make followers, they make more leaders.**

to that vision and coming up with the franchise model.

And whilst the physical results are clear to see, the all-action duo say the emotional and mental benefits are equally visible.

“It’s not about how good you look, but it’s about how good you feel [from the program],” Jason said.

“There are no dickheads, we have to know everyone’s names and I want the person on the bike to ask the person next to them about the first car they drove and what their favourite flavour of ice cream is.

“Leaders don’t make followers, they make more leaders and we delight in getting ex-athletes, CEOs, ex-military, mums and dads, emergency services, desk jockeys and welcoming them into the cultural process – they are my family now.

“People don’t change until they have a reason to change and adversity often provides that reason.”

It’s the adversity facing ex-military that has given the Core9 brand personal success for Jason, and professional success for other service men and women.

Australia’s ex-service personnel endure a 30.2 per cent unemployment rate but it’s an area Core9 is winning the battle.

In 2016 the brand opened its first veteran-owned franchise – and they are also helping ex-athletes.

Having been engaged by the Canterbury Bankstown Bulldogs and Manly Sea Eagles in the National Rugby League – the boys have designed fitness programs to help in all manner of aspects including pre-season and post-career.

In one pre-season “torture test” Manly official Don Singe said he’d learnt

**Royal treatment: Jason Dolan, in his military days, rubs shoulders with Prince Charles, the heir apparent to the British throne.**



more about the players in that 48-hour pressure cooker than he had in the past 10 years of overseeing them.

“They were sleep-deprived, physically exhausted, cold, wet, hungry – but when it was hitting the fan and blokes were complaining, a few of them really stood up,” Craig recalled.

He pointed to the efforts of Matt Ballin, who went on to become a Manly skipper and Origin player, and loveable-larrikin Willie Mason.

“Willie is a true leader, he rallied them and joked with them to help them get through, he really stepped up.”

And stepping up is what it’s all about at a business level for these millennial mates.

Craig is enrolled in a Bachelor of Positive Psychology degree; the boys will head off to Las Vegas as finalists in the NextGen competition next year (see breakout story) and they admit Core9 isn’t far from going international.

“It’s as much about leaving a positive footprint and a legacy,” Craig said.

And the term “failure” is something completely foreign to the two who are travelling the network circuit constantly in their thirst for knowledge.

You only need look at how Jason made it through the elite military ranks.

“When I first entered, I encountered



**Working out: Craig Arnold and Renae Doherty (Studio manager of Manly)**

two weeks of Navy Seal-like training ‘hell’ that we had to survive to get to the next step,” he said.

“We started with 20 blokes and only four of us finished.

“Then there were 12 more months of training that were even worse than the two-weeks of hell – we started that journey with six but only three of us finished.

“Even when we got to TAGE which essentially was the best of the best – we started with 20 and only three of us finished.”

I declared he had to experience times of doubt when the finish line was unreachable.

Quick as a shot, before I’d finished the sentence he replied: “Mate, I was never NOT going to bloody make it”.

## Core9 wins its way to NextGen finals

Jason Dolan and Craig Arnold will vie with the best franchise talent across the world, winning their way through as a finalist in the NextGen competition.

It is a world-wide program that engages millennial entrepreneurs seeking to grow their businesses through the franchise model, and it is the only business incubator in the world focused on franchising.

Initially reluctant to enter the competition, the news that they were finalists came through early in November and it will provide experience and insight money cannot buy.

“Post-military, I started a journal where I wrote ‘one thing and one thing only’ where I wanted to keep a log of the good things the military did for me,” Jason said.

“I looked back the other day and read things like: experiencing mateship and camaraderie of the highest order; I travelled the world, I flew in helicopters and jumped out of them, I learnt how to handle explosives, I felt what it was like to be the last line of defence against counter terrorists ... the list goes on.

“And now we keep adding to a list of achievements with our Core 9 family, and I couldn’t be prouder.

“If it wasn’t for the help and guidance

of the Franchise Council of Australia and Soula Van Kooy, this [finalist nomination for NextGen] would not have happened.

“We’d both like to say thank you from the bottom of our heart. It is by far the start of an amazing experience that we will be forever grateful for.”

The Franchise Council of Australia, in conjunction with the International Franchise Association, encourage an annual search for young entrepreneurs (under the age of 35) with an innovative business that could potentially be franchised (or is franchised) to submit applications to win a place in the global competition.

The finalists/winners have the potential to show their product or services globally and raise awareness of their product/brand; last year the IFA chose 3 finalists to participate in the accelerated workshops with mentoring at their annual convention held in Phoenix Arizona in February.

The other Australian finalist is City Cave Float & Wellness Centre and its founders, Jeremy Hassell and Tim Butters. City Cave provides a unique approach to wellness, combining holistic and clinical services to achieve optimal health and incorporates float therapy amongst its treatments.