

Tensens shines brightly as family approach drives future focus



From left: Lloyd McCaughey, Craig McElligot, Ben Rodgers, Marcia Rodgers, Justin Clynch, Lynden Griffiths, Mandy McCaughey and Michael Wynbergen

Is it possible to manage a successful cleaning supply business today that consistently boasts a fresh focus, ongoing passion for the industry and designer good looks? Most definitely! Ben and Marcia Rodgers are living proof. As they tell INCLEAN journalist Jo Cooper, they are taking their long-established operation to new heights by doing things differently, sharing knowledge and fostering strong connections.

Tensens' home base could easily be a cool corporate technology headquarters. On approach you are struck by the building's attractive modern design and the positioning statement *'Innovate. Educate. Clean'* emblazoned in large letters across its façade.

Step inside and the mirror-like tile floors, perfect product displays and stunning fitout would shame an exclusive CBD designer store.

Tensens, though, is a cleaning supply and equipment business based in the industrial suburb of Kunda Park on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, serving customers ranging from local residents through to cleaning contractors, carpet cleaners and hospitality, healthcare and national accounts. Under the watchful eyes of its owners, Ben and Marcia, it is constantly evolving and pushing the boundaries of what such a business can do.

Although aged in their mid-30s, the couple already have serious runs on the board in the cleaning sector – Marcia has been working in cleaning since she was 18 and Ben from the age of 21. Tensens began almost 21 years ago when Marcia's father, Hans, was a cleaning contractor and grew the business to become Tensens Cleaning Supplies.

"I pretty much came from school to the business," Marcia said. "It's funny, I always dreamed I would do this – there's a lot of good people in this industry and the

opportunity was there to build it up with my Dad as well."

The high school sweethearts, who met at the age of 15, have worked hard in all facets of the business, learned from mentors and faced business challenges, including the 2008 global financial crisis when Tensens defied the odds and attracted new customers on the back of a strong reputation.

The couple were well placed to take up Hans' offer to buy him out in 2010, Ben recalled. That included a rebranding from Tensens Cleaning Supplies to Tensens three years ago; the adoption of the *'Innovate. Educate. Clean'* positioning; and the move from a nearby 500 metre square site that Tensens occupied for 13 years to the new 1600 metre square premises in May last year.

"We were busting out of our building two years before we moved here, but it took that time to find the right place," Ben stated. "The owners of the building now want us to stay 20 years if we can and we have the space to grow into the warehouse and put containers outside."

Together with the showroom and warehouse, the premises feature reception areas, workspaces for the sales and administration teams, an impressive boardroom for training – and even a dedicated media room.

The new site has enabled the team to

continue its focus on janitorial stock, a wide variety of chemicals and environmentally-friendly products as well as attract more walk-in customers and major supplier brands: most recently Hydroforce, Bridgepoint and Prochem.

The *'Innovate. Educate. Clean'* branding has also helped Tensens differentiate itself by publicly defining its focus. Innovate is about the Rodgers and their 12-person team doing business differently.

"The *'Innovate'* part means we're about bringing new products to the market, showing people new things and changing their mindset on how they are cleaning," Ben revealed.

This happens from the showroom floor through to a multi-channel technology approach, and is supported by other innovative touches such as an in-house electrical fitter for servicing and rebuilds and advanced warehouse operations.

Tensens was one of the first cleaning supply businesses with a web presence. "We get a product and break it down on video – what it looks like, what we think about it, features and benefits and how it compares to others on the market," Ben explained.

It is clear they are extremely proud of all their employees – and they offer flexibility during work hours for family events and social activities.

Meanwhile, the *'education'* element means training customers – from householders to corporations – in chemical and tool use, and effective cleaning processes.

"Changing the way you clean a shower might save two minutes, but if you have to clean eight in a day... our customers can make money out of those savings," Ben said.

Education is delivered in the showroom, at customer sites and in the training room using Tensens' own expert in-house trainer.

Finally, the *'clean'* part of the brand encompasses the grassroots of what Tensens offers, in its own unique style. "We want to differentiate ourselves from every other cleaning supplier," Marcia stated.

"We may not be the cheapest as quality is imperative, but we can offer different products and systems and service and backup. We sell a complete system; a complete package."

The Rodgers are also brimming with enthusiasm for the future. "We're always future proofing and five-year planning – and we're hitting our targets," said Ben.

And he said no matter how much growth occurs they will never forget their family focus. "Our team is encouraged to run this like a large business, but we will never take the Tensens out of Tensens."

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