

As a child, Brad Skelton dreamt of following in his father's footsteps of owning his own successful business, as he had. Little did he know that playing with those Tonka trucks in the sandpit of his suburban Brisbane, Australia home would later lead to moving the real thing all over the world in his own company.

Today, he has emerged as one of Australia's most successful businessmen after founding an international, multi-million dollar heavy machinery moving company – Skelton Sherborne.

Recognised as one of Queensland's largest, privately owned businesses, Skelton Sherborne is today considered amongst the largest shipping agents of heavy machinery in the world and has offices across the globe, including Houston, Amsterdam and Yokohama, as well as throughout Australia. Skelton Sherborne has become the choice of heavy industry.

In 1995, at the age of 28, Brad Skelton took a huge gamble: With just AU\$2,000 he started his own freight forwarding company – Skelton Tomkinson. Back then, Skelton Tomkinson was just Brad and his secretary. "I'd use one credit card to pay another so I could make payroll," he recalls. "Or I'd move an excavator and use the profit to buy office furniture. It was an extremely humble beginning."

He started the company with minimal capital and now has an annual turnover approaching \$140 million, with over 50 staff working for the company's worldwide operations.

After beginning work as a runner with a local customs brokerage firm, Brad discovered the need for an all-encompassing global heavy machinery transport company. The formation of Skelton Tomkinson allowed that niche to be serviced. Traditionally, moving heavy machinery around the world was undertaken by general freight forwarders.

"They were trying to be everything to everyone. I saw there was a need for a total service solution and went for it."

Today the company can now handle shipping of heavy equipment to and from anywhere on the planet and it has a significant market share of this business.

The company has rapidly expanded in the past fourteen years. In 2003, Skelton Tomkinson offices were opened in Perth and Auckland – heralding the company's first overseas base. Later that year the United States office was opened in Houston to gain entry into the largest market in the world.

The Melbourne office was open mid-2004, followed by a Sydney office in March 2005. With a global approach, the company has established stronger relationships with its key suppliers and contractors, such as major shipping lines, heavy haulage operators, mobile crane hire operators and machine cleaning suppliers, in each of the world's major ports.

In 2009, Brad acquired Sherborne ACA – one of the industry's oldest and most reputable freight forwarders. The ensuing entity – Skelton Sherborne – provides unsurpassed experience and resources when dealing with heavy and oversized equipment.

Over the years, Brad has invested heavily in his business by putting profits back into his company in order to continue the rapid growth. Gutsy, strategic moves have fueled this strategy. An example of this is the development of Skelton Terminal 1, the company's headquarters at Lytton, which opened in February 2005. The \$7 million facility, the only one of its kind in Australia, is a one-stop-shop for the mining, earthmoving, construction and agricultural industries that import heavy machinery into

the country, hence the proximity to the Port of Brisbane. It provides a heavy vehicle processing and distribution unit with AQIS washing, accessory installation, light mechanical repairs, bonded storage and heavy haulage.

Similar strategic investments include Brad's tough decision last year to sell his entire crane and truck fleet and reinvest the unlocked capital in his international shipping business.

Faced with a hot market, Brad knew he could easily sell the fleet piecemeal. At the time, it was Australia's largest heavy haulage fleet. With favorable market dynamics, Brad felt confident he could get everything sold over a couple of days and really pull in a global audience if sold via auction. The move, while nerve-wracking, paid off and unlocked the valuable capital that would fuel the global expansion and greater economic security heading into an uncertain market.

Brad is firmly committed to learning and building his business skills. Given the rapid growth the company underwent several years ago, he knew that his own business skills and knowledge needed bolstering to keep the business driving forward. Consequently he applied and gained entry to the prestigious "Birthing of Giants" programme at MIT in Boston. The knowledge and contacts gained at MIT kept propelling the businesses forward.

Brad's transport entities have been frequently featured in BRW's Fast 100 list for high growth Australian companies. He is also a Fellow of the following organizations:-

- The Australian Institute of Company directors
- The Australian Institute of Management
- The Australian Institute of Export

Both the business and Brad personally have been recognized with many awards. These include:-

- 2004 Ernst and Young-Entrepreneur of the year award
- 2004 Australian Institute of Management- Owner manager of the year
- Lloyds List DCN Transport & Shipping Logistics Awards - 2005, 2006 & 2007
- National Logistics & Supply Chain Awards - Transport Logistics Award - 2003 & 2004
- Q400: Business Queensland's annual awards for the top 400 privately owned businesses in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008