

# MOST YOUNG

**THE FUTURE STARS  
OF MORTGAGE  
BROKING. NOW.**



## The future of broking is right here, right now. **KEVIN EDDY** meets the brokers who'll be leading the industry tomorrow – and who are already making waves today

**B**roking is all too often characterised as a middle-aged profession. However, the stereotypical view of a former banker in his late 40s or early 50s in a baggy suit is one that's increasingly inaccurate. Today's broker is increasingly professional, savvy and, above all, getting younger.

Over the last few years, *MPA's* annual report on the top rookie brokers has uncovered many stars of the future, either recommended by their aggregator or franchise or selected due to prior industry recognition. The aim is the same this time around – although we have added an extra twist in 2012, imposing an upper age limit of 35 – reflecting, we believe, the new wave of young talent coming into the industry.

And what a wave of talent it is. The 12 brokers featured on the following pages have all come out of the blocks fast, writing significant business straightaway – regardless of whether they're working in an established environment or setting up on their own.

Despite having significant differences in geographical location, age, background and prior experience, they've all also got a few things in common: a laser-targeted focus on customer service, big ambitions and, most importantly, the drive to achieve those goals.

Listen to some in the mainstream press, and you'd believe that mortgage broking is a dying industry. These Young Guns are the evidence that the reverse is true – and that the future is in very safe hands.

### A word from our partners

Now in its third year, the *MPA* Young Guns feature highlights a select few of the industry's most outstanding young mortgage brokers. Each broker is acknowledged for their customer service, outstanding performance and business growth.

To be recognised as a Young Gun is to be acknowledged nationally as talent on the rise; a potential industry leader or influencer. Each of these Young Guns is an example of success. They each have a story to tell and advice to give which may help many readers to be more successful in their own businesses.

Commonwealth Bank is committed to the mortgage broking industry and encourages brokers to be professional in every way. Professionalism is a commitment to ongoing education and ethical behaviour, leading the way in customer service and constantly raising the bar in the industry.

The future of our industry depends upon professional, young operators who are focused on building successful businesses. This feature highlights those who are doing it right and through the publicity hopes to encourage other young brokers in the industry to continue to strive to be the best in what they do.

**Kathy Cummings**  
Executive General Manager, Third Party and Mobile Banking



Twenty-three-year-old Theo Chambers fits the definition of a rising star perfectly. Despite only joining Oxygen Home Loans last February and starting writing business in July, he had already racked up over \$57m in lodgments and \$20.7m in settlements by the end of 2011.

Chambers' talent for sales isn't a surprise, however, even at the age of 19 it was clear that he was a sales gun.

"I started off knocking on doors selling Foxtel: that was where I built some sales experience. It was quite intense!" he says. Within a month of starting that role, Chambers had already broken two sales records and had been promoted to team leader with his own company car. Doorknocking was also instrumental in his next career move.

"After being there just under a year, I knocked on the door of a CBA executive. He liked the way I approached him and handled the situation, and offered me a job," says Chambers. "I then worked for CBA for three years."

Even though he was rising through the ranks, Chambers was beginning to get ants in his pants – and found a solution in broking.

"I like the commission-only system, it drives me," he admits. "At CBA, I was on a decent base salary, but I once came second in the state for product sales and only got a small bonus that year. If I'm doing that work, I want the reward. I don't mind staying back until 9pm if it means getting some extra pay that month. Commission only just drives me to work harder."

Chambers' work ethic is impressive: he habitually works six days a week, and highlights Saturdays as the days when he picks up new business. His tactic is to team up with real estate agents at client meetings, open houses and auctions to meet clients – and estimates he picks up around two-thirds of new business this way. If that wasn't enough, he's also studying for a bachelor's degree in finance and marketing, due to be completed this year.

With all this on his plate, it's no wonder that he's aiming to spend a bit more time on the 'life' side of the work/life balance this year. Even so, he's still got ambitious business goals.

"One goal would be to settle \$10m in a month, and another is to lodge \$25m in a month," he adds. "I also want to win AMA Young Gun of the Year, so being selected by *MPA* is right up there as well!"

**NAME: THEO CHAMBERS**  
**COMPANY: OXYGEN HOME LOANS**  
**LOCATION: NEUTRAL BAY, NSW**

**"MY FIRST  
JOB WAS  
KNOCKING  
ON DOORS  
SELLING  
FOXTEL"**



**NAME: HAYLEY GRANT**  
**COMPANY: VANTAGE FINANCIAL**  
**LOCATION: BRISBANE, QLD**

**“I ALWAYS  
 SEND EMAIL  
 NEWSLETTERS  
 TO EXISTING  
 CLIENTS”**

Brisbane broker Hayley Grant's only been a broker for 14 months – and it's a career change that's required her to eat some humble pie.

“I used to work for Suncorp as a lending manager, and spent eight solid years bagging out mortgage brokers!” exclaims Grant. “However, I was recommended to Vantage Financial and they didn't have a broker on board so they approached me – and I love being a broker!”

Grant highlights the variety of banks, products and policies as one of the key differences – and strengths – of being a broker, and admits that she's definitely changed her tune on mortgage broking. It's no bad thing, either, as her settlements for 2011 sit at \$18.9m – an achievement for which she was awarded Vow Financial's Rising Star award at the aggregator's 2011 conference in Fiji.

Grant's aims for 2012 involve significantly growing her total settlements to \$35m: a target that will be aided by Vantage's recent purchase of a Mackay-based financial planning business.

She's also planning on keeping up the marketing assault she's been conducting since joining Vantage.

“You have to have a marketing plan,” she says “At Suncorp, I was a lazy lender because everyone came to me and I had a massive database. Working for a new company in Brisbane city is more challenging: I'm always sending out email newsletters and staying in touch with existing clients. Service is the key to everything.”

Another plan for 2012 involves Grant getting out on her new Kawasaki Ninja motorbike.

“I'm 34 and going through an early mid-life crisis, so six months ago I bought a motorbike,” she laughs. “I ride on weekends and into work every day – even so, my parents still refuse to discuss it!”



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**NAME: PHIL ROGERS**  
**COMPANY: LOANMARKET**  
**LOCATION: TOWNSVILLE, QLD**

**“IT’S THAT  
 LEVEL OF  
 SERVICE THAT  
 GIVES US  
 THE POINT OF  
 DIFFERENCE”**

North Queensland broker Phil Rogers hasn’t yet clocked up two years in the industry, but is already settling amounts that would put many capital city brokers to shame.

Previously in motor sales, Rogers started his broking career in a Ray White real estate office in early 2010. Since then, he’s opened his own shopfront, employed a PA, and has been elected to LoanMarket’s Queensland broker council. Above all that, he settled \$17.5m in 2011 – a great result for a non-capital city market.

Rogers puts his success down to a single-minded focus on customer service and a close partnership with his Ray White counterparts.

“Customer service is a huge part of what we do: it’s that level of service that gives us the point of difference,” he says. “We market inwards to the database and work with the real estate agents. We don’t have billboards or \$10m TV ad budgets, but we’re building a substantial business from referrals and word of mouth. We’ve progressed from using a table in the Ray White office in one of their interview rooms to having our own shopfront and tripling what we were doing business-wise.”

Aims for 2012 include reaching LoanMarket elite performer level, which means writing \$36m over the course of the year – however, Rogers believes that’s more than possible given the rapid growth Townsville’s going through. Rogers also credits the support from the LoanMarket group as essential to bringing him up to speed quickly.

“I can’t give the guys enough praise – their support has been a big part of my success, to be where I am today – as well as the support of a fantastic principal here in the real estate business.”



**NAME: MOHAMMAD HAMMOUD**  
**COMPANY: SYDNEY’S BEST HOME LOANS**  
**LOCATION: LAKEMBA, NSW**

Having strong local links is the secret to 33-year-old Mohammad Hammoud’s success since becoming a broker less than a year-and-a-half ago.

The former Commonwealth Bank employee took the leap because he wanted to get the rewards for his hard work himself, rather than just ‘a pat on the back’. However, it’s being part of his local community which has paid dividends since starting his own business.

“I have a lot of connections with clients and I’m from the local area – often I’ll be walking in the street and people will come and ask me questions,” explains Hammoud. “Everyone talks in the local community and I try to give the best service – the service I’d want for myself – so I know that they’re happy.”

Building trust is essential, he adds – more so than in a banking role.

“When I used to work with the bank, I used to build a relationship, but that was more business-like,” says Hammoud. “When you have your own business, you need to build more trust, because it’s my business – it affects me. If I do something wrong by the client, that client’s not going to come back to me or refer anyone to me. If I do something good by him or her, more than likely they are going to refer, and down the track they’ll give me a call if they need something else.”

2011 saw Hammoud settle over \$19m: 2012 promises to be a year of further growth, with Hammoud planning to write larger volumes than 2011 and diversify into personal loans, car loans and insurance. He’s also got his eye on going into commercial lending, too. This is one rookie broker with big plans ahead.

**NAME: BRAD QUILTY**  
**COMPANY: ELDERS HOME LOANS**  
**LOCATION: KAMBAH, ACT**

**“BUYING A HOME  
 SHOULDN’T BE A  
 PAINFUL PROCESS”**



Canberra broker Brad Quilty, 34, started his own Elders Home Loans franchise in December 2010 after a year-and-a-half with Aussie – and he’s gone from strength to strength.

The former hospitality industry manager and car salesman took his first step into the mortgage broking industry back in 2008, when he started to get interested in becoming a property investor.

“It seemed a natural progression to me that if I really wanted to understand how to be an investor, I should be involved in the industry. As I wanted to understand buying property using structures such as trusts, and doing developments, I figured I would need to understand how finance worked,” he explains. “The final straw came when we used a mortgage broker to purchase our current home.”

Quilty says that, despite coming into the industry with little experience, the ability to deal with people was “the key”.

“I love making the process of buying a home easy,” he adds. “It shouldn’t be a painful process. I must admit that I also love it when I see a new client after they have been to their local bank branch and was told how hard it is and that they ‘probably can’t get a loan anyway’.”

Quilty settled \$14.5m in 2011 in a tough market, and has high goals for 2012.

“I am really striving to crack the MPA Top 100 – that has been the goal since July last year. That would be a great achievement,” he says. “I also want to expand and start bringing on new brokers to train, start creating a little group of like-minded brokers.”



This isn't the first time that 33-year-old Andrew Morel has been highlighted as a rookie broker to watch – last year, he took home two Australian Mortgage Awards, including the overall Young Gun of the Year award. He puts his meteoric rise down to solid partnership working and an investor-heavy client database.

“I work closely with investors – 90% of my clients are investors, the other 10% are owner-occupiers who are trying to get into investment properties!” says Morel. “We take a long-term view on wealth creation – you might be buying a house but let's get you set up long term as well.”

That investor focus means Morel has a steady stream of ‘repeat customers’ – he estimates 60% of the \$20m he settled in 2011 came from existing customers. One key innovation that he's also made great use of for building repeat business is a post-settlement budget tracker for clients.

“I've designed budgeting software which we send out post-settlement to clients which allows them to do more thorough cash flow tracking and find out where their surplus funds are. We do a review after six months and know where that client sits: it also means that we've got the perfect tool for budgeting – which is what ASIC wants us to do, too – as we've got six months' worth of spending, and we know exactly how much the client is able to borrow. There's peace of mind for everyone concerned and we're ticking boxes from a compliance standpoint as well.”

Morel's been busy outside of his core business, too: aside from barracking for AFL team Essendon, he was elected to the MFAA Victorian state council in November. Morel has also been laying the groundwork for two new ventures launching this year: a money and credit management program for Year 10 and Year 11 schoolchildren, and a real estate ‘aggregation’ business called Buyproperty, which aims to give other brokers' clients easier access to property developers and wholesalers.

Back to broking, Morel is aiming to settle an average of \$4m per month in 2012 off his own back, and is also looking at expanding his Club franchise by adding more loan writers and admin staff – especially as he's expecting his other ventures to take more of his time as they ramp up.

**NAME: ANDREW MOREL**  
**COMPANY: CLUB FINANCIAL SERVICES**  
**LOCATION: NORTH MELBOURNE**

**“I WORK CLOSELY WITH INVESTORS – 90% OF MY CLIENTS ARE INVESTORS”**

If it weren't for a face familiar to regular *MPA* readers, Monica Van Riet might never have become a mortgage broker.

“My first taste of mortgage broking came when I purchased my first home through Wendy Higgins' office in Adelaide about 10 years ago,” explains Van Riet, 33. “I was working for a large multinational company in the travel industry.

“While I loved the face-to-face interactions with customers, being a travel agent wasn't something I wanted to continue with long term. Based on the positive experience with Wendy, my next career move and the decision to join the Mortgage Choice family was a no-brainer!”

Van Riet started out as a broker in November 2010. With no finance experience, she built her business acumen and customer service philosophy from other industries and her own experience of investing in property – and resulted in \$12.1m worth of settlements in 2011.

She uses social media as a key sales tool, for a number of reasons.

“I feel that social media is the way of the future, and more targeted for the demographic of clientele that I see. It's also very cost effective and reaches a far wider network of people than traditional marketing activities,” says Van Riet. “Social media also helps improve my website's search rankings, so I try to be as consistent as possible.”

Real life networking is also essential, adds Van Riet.

“I've joined two networking groups and a political party in an effort to get myself out and about in my local community,” she comments. Van Riet's efforts are certainly bearing fruit, with the opening of a dedicated shopfront. Her targets for this year include averaging \$4m in settlements per month, and having a loan book of \$40m by the end of the year.

And the advice she'd give to a prospective broker? The same advice that she was given at the outset.

“Be persistent, don't give up and try anything once. Do everything that you possibly can to build a pipeline and database in the first 12–24 months and then the rest will flow.”

**“SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE, AND IS MORE TARGETED”**



**NAME: MONICA VAN RIET**  
**COMPANY: MORTGAGE CHOICE**  
**LOCATION: PORT MELBOURNE, VIC**



**NAME: ANTONY MUIR**  
**COMPANY: MORTGAGE CHOICE**  
**LOCATION: BURLEIGH WATERS, QLD**

**“ALWAYS  
 ASK FOR  
 REFERRALS...  
 I’M ALWAYS  
 ASKING FOR  
 BUSINESS”**

Former motor trade group business manager Antony Muir took over the Burleigh franchise of Mortgage Choice in December 2010 – and in a little over a year has tripled its productivity.

Muir, 31, might never have made the switch to broking in the first place if it wasn’t for his current business partner, however.

“My business partner already owned a franchise in Miami: he refinanced my home loan for me and saved me a whole heap of money,” he explains. “We kept in contact and the opportunity came up for an existing book to be purchased and I couldn’t resist it.”

Muir’s not been backwards in coming forwards since entering the industry: he’s got well and truly stuck into the community, becoming president of the local Business Networking International chapter, sponsoring the Runaway Bay soccer club and running property investment and SMSF lending seminars both locally and nationally. He’s also looked at the business from the ground up, and instituted some changes that have transformed its productivity.

“When I took it over, we had a loan writer working in the business and two administration staff: the two admin staff were job sharing and that made things a little difficult,” he explains. “One of the staff members took another role, which made me think about how the office was set up.”

Muir reorganised the structure to create a dedicated loan processing coordinator role, and then he employed an administration person to mine the franchises’ database and book home loan health checks. He also bought a loan tracking system to improve loan processing. As a result of the changes and his hard work, the business has gone from a monthly average settlement of \$1.8m to \$5.9m, and Muir’s loan book has increased by 40% over the last 12 months.

Next up is acquisition of another franchise alongside the expansion of the Burleigh office – Muir’s hoping to hire another loan writer and two more support staff. If that wasn’t enough, he and two other franchisees jointly launched a financial planning business last October, so he’s also keen to ensure that it becomes a success.

Muir attributes his success not only to excellent customer service, but also to having excellent staff around him. He also advises brokers not to be shy about asking for referrals.

“Always ask for referrals,” he says. “I ask for referrals on signup, I ask for referrals on approval, I ask for referrals four weeks after settlement, I ask for referrals six months later... I’m always asking for business. I don’t want money, bottles of wine or beer – my present for doing a great job is someone else coming to see me on a client’s recommendation.”



**NAME: LACHLAN COTTEE**  
**COMPANY: YELLOW BRICK ROAD**  
**LOCATION: MANLY, NSW**

**“DIVERSIFY  
 AND CREATE  
 A SECOND  
 OR THIRD  
 INCOME  
 STREAM”**

Lachlan Cottee’s a native of Sydney’s Northern Beaches through and through – and that connection to the area was one of the key reasons he became a broker and wealth management advisor with Yellow Brick Road.

“I loved the idea of living and working on the beaches, as well as being in charge of your own destiny but at the same time being accountable to myself and my staff,” explains 26-year-old Cottee. He’s been in and out of the finance industry since 2006, first as a credit analyst with Balmain Commercial, then as a loan processor for Mortgageport. After a short stint on the road in sales, he saw an opportunity with Yellow Brick Road.

“I started with Yellow Brick Road in 2010 although didn’t really get going until half way through the year. Since then, things have really taken off.”

They have indeed. In 2010, he and his business partner took home YBR’s ‘Rising Star’ award. Fast forward a year, and they’re settling \$5m per month in loans, plus an average \$10,000 per month income from the wealth management side of the business. They’ve also recently opened a second branch in Dee Why, to take advantage of what Cottee calls “a huge market” at the upper end of the beaches. It’s no surprise that he’s on the hunt for new brokers and administration staff.

Cottee’s something of an evangelist for diversified wealth management models, firmly believing that every broker must diversify to stay in the business for the long term.

“Not only does it create a second, third or fourth income stream, but it allows you to be the one point of contact for every financial decision your clients make,” he insists.

“You are no longer a mortgage broker, but a wealth manager and local expert. Mortgage brokers in the past have applied a ‘set and forget’ mindset to business – I believe mortgage broking and wealth management is an ongoing relationship right through to retirement and beyond.”



**NAME: JOSH BARTLETT**  
**COMPANY: LOANMARKET**  
**LOCATION: CHELTENHAM, VIC**

**“YOU CAN GET CLIENTS FOR LIFE IN THE MORTGAGE INDUSTRY”**

Former personal trainer and gym owner Josh Bartlett's no stranger to running his own business – and mortgage broking seemed to be the perfect fit when he decided to make a career change just nine months ago.

“My wife owned a real estate agency, so real estate's been a bit of a passion for us – it's something that I've always wanted to be a part of, although not as a real estate agent,” he explains. “I attended a Young Professionals in Real Estate evening a while back, saw a couple of brokers speak, and the next day I approached a few people to get the ball rolling.”

At the time, Bartlett, 32, had been a personal trainer for over a decade, owned and ran two gyms – which he sold within two weeks of putting them up for sale. He argues that, while they might seem very different, personal training and mortgage broking are actually very similar.

“It's all about people skills,” says Bartlett. “I kept the same clientele for 10–11 years while I was training: I thought that if you could do that in the fitness industry, then you can get clients for life in the mortgage industry.”

That attitude is paying off already: since writing his first loan in May, he's already moved into an office and had a banner month in November, submitting \$7.6m, unconditionally approving \$5.4m and settling \$5.9m. His total settlements for the year stand at \$11.6m.

Bartlett's absolute goal is to be settling \$10m a month.

“It's a big ambition, but you've got to have big ambitions in this industry!” he concludes.

Shannon Lindsay may just be 22 years old, but he's already writing amounts that would make established brokers green with envy, with \$40m worth of home loans settled in 2011.

Indeed, despite his tender age and the fact that he's been a broker for a little over two years, Lindsay's been obsessed with property since a young age: he started working for NAB at just 17, investing in property at 18 and joined his father's Smartline franchise at 19.

That passion for property that has seen Lindsay diversify beyond vanilla mortgage broking, also operating a property seeking service that involves establishing a client's borrowing capacity, obtaining pre-approval and, from here, sourcing house and land packages to suit their budget.

Diversification is also something that runs in the family, with Lindsay's father also operating as a migration agent.

“Because of that, a lot of our clients are migrants – probably about 60%,” explains Lindsay. “It's really rewarding helping people get their first homes, then coming back and buying investment properties, too.”

Lindsay's not done diversifying, either: having recently completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree in accounting, he's currently studying for a financial planning qualification, with the aim of becoming a ‘one-stop shop’ for his clients' financial needs. In the short term, he's looking to sustain 2011's performance throughout what could be a volatile year, and to continue to expand his book.

Keeping his clients happy is priority number one, though.

“When I first started, my dad said ‘whatever you do, look after your clients,’” says Lindsay.

“Clients can call me at 11pm – I'll still answer the phone. If you look after your clients, and look after their best interests, you'll be rewarded for it, because they'll refer you to their friends and family. That's how you grow your business.”

**“IF YOU LOOK AFTER YOUR CLIENTS, YOU'LL BE REWARDED BY REFERRALS”**



**NAME: SHANNON LINDSAY**  
**COMPANY: SMARTLINE PERSONAL MORTGAGE ADVISORS**  
**LOCATION: DANDENONG, VIC**



**NAME: HENAN GAO**  
**COMPANY: SHINNING CROWN INTERNATIONAL**  
**LOCATION: SYDNEY, NSW**

**IT'S ESSENTIAL TO GAIN BOTH KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE**

Henan ‘Ben’ Gao, 28, has only been a broker since April 2011, but is already turning heads amongst those in the FAST aggregation group.

Prior to setting out on his own, Gao worked as a marketing development and administration manager for a broking firm. In this short time, he has already established himself as a significant business partner to several major banks including Westpac and ANZ in particular. Indeed in December, Gao was FAST's number-one ranked broker for settlements with ANZ.

The volumes he's writing are certainly impressive for a rookie broker: settled business as of the end of November 2011 stood at \$26m, with a further \$10m due to settle by February 2012. Gao is expecting to settle upwards of \$50m by the end of his first year in business: he's already employed an additional

two loan writers to cope with demand and has established office premises in the Sydney CBD.

He's also evangelical about the need to professionalise the broking industry. “Compared to financial planning, mortgage broking is too easy to enter,” says Gao. “Too many people are doing it part-time.”

He recommends that prospective brokers take the time to gain both professional knowledge and experience before taking the plunge – and that patience is a virtue.

Gao's aims for 2012 including continuing to bolster his reputation within the Sydney marketplace and settling a staggering \$150m by the end of the year. A tough target, to be sure – but Gao's certainly the kind of broker who's got the potential to achieve it.