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YOUNG GUNS

AUSTRALIA'S BROKING STARS OF THE FUTURE

Meet the young talent that's taking the Australian mortgage broking industry by storm

With all the stories of doom and gloom that have engulfed the Australian financial services and property markets in recent years, you'd be forgiven for wondering why bright young things would be drawn to a career in mortgage broking. Listen to the doomsayers and you'll hear about mass redundancies in the finance sector and cautious homebuyers sitting on their hands waiting for the property bubble to burst.

It's both inspiring and refreshing, therefore, to speak to the numerous ambitious young brokers who have made great

strides in their fledgling careers, and show no signs of turning back. This year's MPA Young Guns report features a bright crop of promising new entrants to the industry who are attacking the profession with vigour.

So how did we select these young stars? Candidates had to be no older than 35, have been broking for no more than two years and can't have featured in last year's Young Guns report – only fresh faces need apply. Judging by the calibre of new brokers that feature in this year's rundown, the future of mortgage broking looks to be very bright indeed.





Young Guns enriching our future

The ideas and talent recognised in this year's MPA Young Guns feature are the ones that will grow and enrich our industry into the future. They may even change the way you are doing business.

The MPA Young Guns feature highlights a select few of the industry's most outstanding young mortgage brokers. They have been nominated by their Aggregator and have been acknowledged for their customer service, outstanding performance and business growth.

The future of our industry depends upon professional, young operators who are focused on building successful businesses by delivering excellent customer service. This feature highlights those who are doing it right and it shows they are all driven to help their customers to get the best home loan to suit their needs.

Commonwealth Bank is committed to the mortgage broking industry and encourages all brokers to be professional in every way; to adopt on-going education and ethical behaviour.

If you want to see the best of now - look to the winners at industry Awards such as the Australian Mortgage Awards and the MFAA Excellence Awards. If you want to see the best of tomorrow, look to this special on Young Guns in the industry.

The MPA Young Guns feature has been recognising young talent since 2010. If your name isn't in here yet, don't give up trying.

Kathy Cummings

Executive General Manager, Third Party and Mobile Banking

NAME: FAB MASTRO
COMPANY: MORTGAGE CHOICE
LOCATION: MELBOURNE, VIC



Twenty-seven-year-old Fab Mastro has taken an interesting route into the world of mortgage broking. Before becoming a loans consultant at Mortgage Choice in Melbourne, he worked in the sporting and recreational industry with the YMCA, as well as some other sporting organisations. Recently, however, he decided that it was time to seek pastures new and move out into fresh territory with his career, and it turned out that mortgage broking was the perfect fit. Evidence that moving into the mortgage space was the right move for Fab comes in the form of his impressive settlement figures. During

the 2012 calendar year he settled \$37.5m of home loans. Not bad for a mortgage broking freshman.

"Getting into the industry was a combination of factors," he explains. "Having the right contacts, getting involved in an opportunity that was going to provide the right support base - which I definitely have - always enjoying the interaction with clients and having a love of property. After buying my first property and going through the process, I saw an opportunity to become involved in a way that suited both my lifestyle and my hunger for career progression. I

now work the hours I want to, can operate from a remote location if need be and am building not just a loan book, but hopefully clients for life. This has proven extremely rewarding, and it's something I hope to do into the future."

When questioned about what he has learnt about broking so far, he notes that the single thing clients are crying out for is great service.

"Some brokers talk about it and don't deliver; others don't talk enough about how they do deliver. It is a fine line, but at the end of the day it's only achieved by putting in the effort and having an amazing support team behind you. If a client becomes a 'raving fan' of the service you provide, this is what then builds your business."

Career-wise Mastro would like to further entrench himself in the finance and property industries, and would ultimately like to be able to employ others. To continue learning is also another key goal. "I suppose the day I stop learning in this industry is the day I move on!" he says. "I'm always looking for ways to improve the way I operate and gather different ideas of doing things, whether it is by trying to better my skills, learning new information by attending industry events or PD days - or simply improving my management techniques.

"The industry is in an interesting period right now. With the change in credit legislation and the overall slowing of credit growth, some would expect brokers to either leave the industry or begin the transition away from it. I really see it as an opportunity to change the way brokers operate and offer a more comprehensive service, both in what we initially provide to the client and the ongoing contact we have with them throughout the journey. I certainly have some ideas around this, but that may be an idea for another time!"

NAME: KARLI MARTIN
COMPANY: MORTGAGE CHOICE
LOCATION: BRISBANE, QLD

One of the youngest brokers in this year's Young Guns, 22-year-old Karli Martin has made great strides in her short career in the world of mortgage broking. Starting out as an admin assistant at Mortgage Choice in inner North Brisbane in July 2011, Martin showed great potential from the get-go, and within six months was offered the opportunity to move into a loans consultant role – which she grabbed with both hands.



“After seeing the professionalism of the brokers around me, I immediately jumped at the offer,” she explains. “I completed all the required qualifications and began writing loans in February 2012.” She went on to settle \$23.2m worth of loans last year, showing that she’s taken to the job like a fish to water.

In terms of short-term goals, Martin aims to advance her mortgage broking skills and continue to increase her volume of clients and applications, which will in turn see her settlement numbers increase. “In the long term, my goal is to continue working for Mortgage Choice in Brisbane and to make the most of any opportunities that may emerge,” she adds.

“I only see positive things for the industry. There has been consistent growth in our local franchise business. I envisage this to be replicated industry wide and I don’t anticipate any change. Lenders are more competitive than ever trying to gain market share, and this combined with the drive of clients to compare loans to save money, means brokers are the best solution to assist them.”

So what’s the secret to her successful entry into the mortgage broking market? Martin puts it all down to having great mentors. “I’m very fortunate to be in an office surrounded by successful mortgage brokers. The things that I have learnt from them are invaluable [such as] understanding that the customer is the most important aspect to being successful, as is building strong business relationships. I’m a very competitive person who is always aiming to improve and develop, professionally. I believe this determination is important in any successful broker.”

NAME: CALLUM KERR
COMPANY: AUSSIE
LOCATION: GREENSBOROUGH, VIC

Thirty-five-year-old Callum Kerr originally started out in real estate, but the close ties with mortgage brokers that he forged while working in the UK saw him move into the broking field back in Australia.

“I was an estate agent in the UK for four years, as well as two years in Australia. In the UK we had a mortgage broker working in the office, and our sales targets were actually aligned to how many referrals go to the mortgage broker. So we needed to have a fairly good understanding of mortgages, how they worked and how much people could borrow. So that interested me.”

His mother is also a finance professional, having worked in banking all her life. She owns half of an Aussie franchise, and Kerr decided to move into the family business.

When asked whether the kind of in-house referral arrangement that he experienced between brokers and real estate agents in the UK would work in Australia, he noted that this may not work for all customers.

“We’ve got a lot of key referral partners, and a lot of them are estate agents. The difference here is when they’re working in the office it’s almost too in-house. [Client’s may think] ‘I don’t want the estate agent knowing how much I can borrow,’” he says.

“With the people we deal with in the first conversation we say we’re completely independent to these guys. ‘Whatever you say to me is 100% confidential!’”

Kerr echoes the sentiments of many of our Young Guns in stating that success is all about service: “You’re selling the person, not the product. For example, my real estate background helps me immensely. A lot of people don’t know how to make an offer, and I give them a bit of help with that as well.” All of which helped him to settle \$35.8m in the past 12 months.





NAME: JOSH GILBERT
COMPANY: LOAN MARKET
LOCATION: ST KILDA, VIC



Twenty-nine-year-old Josh Gilbert exemplifies the work ethic demonstrated by our Young Guns. When asked what he's learnt about becoming a successful mortgage broker in his short career, his answer is simple: "You are ultimately rewarded for how hard you work."

"I think to be a successful broker you have to be good at building rapport with your clients and have good time management," he adds, "[as well as] a desire to continually learn and most of all the motivation to drive your business."

It's this independent entrepreneurial streak, and a desire to meet the customer's

needs, that drove Josh to move out of the confines of being a credit union lending consultant and into the broking space.

"I have seen first hand how restrictive working with one financial institution with a strict lending policy can be. It was frustrating declining customer applications back at my old job when I knew they could obtain finance at a bank just around the corner. I wanted to be that person that could offer solutions and not turn people away," he explains.

"I want to continually develop my knowledge and skills of lending into more forms of complex lending solutions, eventually building a team around me that will allow me to focus more on seeking out new business as well as continually maintaining my existing database."

He sees a bright future for the mortgage broking profession, where clients trust their brokers enough to ask them to recommend anything from financial planners and accountants to builders and buyer's agents.

"This client mentality of not only seeing the mortgage broker for borrowing solutions but also as their one-stop shop for other services closely related to their industry can be attributed to two things," he says.

"Since the legislation ban on exit fees, competition within the industry has grown. This on the basis of stronger industry body requirements (diploma) as well as ASIC continual overview of the NCCP Act. This will

ensure brokers are suitably qualified and help build credibility of brokers.

"With the continual increase in competing for leads growing over time, brokers are building strong relationships with as many closely associated industry partners as possible. This presents much needed cross-sell opportunities. All of whom can provide valuable services for our clients."

These grand visions are all certainly a far cry from his post-high school vocation – shovelling rocks and sand in the scorching summer heat all day as a labourer.

NAME: MATTHEW FORD
COMPANY: FINESTREAM GROUP
LOCATION: UNLEY, SA

Finestream Group managing director Matthew Ford may only be 23 years old, but he already has a fine head for business. And in the case of his team at Finestream Group, business is all about concentrating on what they do well – and marketing themselves in that area.

"We have always predominately been focused in the asset finance field, specialising in motor vehicles and plant and equipment finance," he explains. "Increasing demand from our customers has led to the recent formation of a mortgage broking service. However, to avoid taking on more work than I could handle, and potentially jeopardising our existing level of service or reputation, I sought out and employed the best candidates I could find to manage the home loan business; young, mostly ex-bank workers with a strong motivation to carve out their own section of the industry, and enthusiasm and knowledge to provide the highest level of customer service."

Referrals, too, are central to Ford's ethos, and he has built up a solid network of referral partners. He also encourages his team



to actively ask clients for referrals, which means service has to be top-notch.

“We want them to walk away wanting to use us again, and to encourage their friends and family to do the same,” he says. “Being based in Adelaide, reputation is everything. Everybody knows everybody and you only get one shot to prove yourself to your clients and potential referral partners. We have worked very hard to build up our reputation in the field of asset and equipment finance in Adelaide. How you are perceived by the market is very important; we constantly work towards being known as the best in our field.”

Ford took a big risk in entering the mortgage broking market, as that meant ditching his job with a big four accounting firm, but a personal experience persuaded him to make the move. He knew he wanted to work with money and went into accounting to gain exposure to a cross section of different businesses before deciding on his next move.

“I did not enjoy it at all,” he explains. “Joining the firm was one of the best things that I will ever do because it taught me very quickly (and thank God right at the beginning of my career) what I did not like. I knew that I didn’t want to be an accountant, I knew that I didn’t want to be a very small wheel in a very large machine, and I knew that I didn’t want a desk job tucked away from the world referring to clients as surnames only rather than ever actually meeting them in person.” But a chance encounter would change all that.

“While working for a large accounting firm I purchased a house with the help of a mortgage broker who was referred to me by my real estate agent at the time. With a common interest in cars and business, we became friends and not long after that I quit the accounting firm and started working as a trainee mortgage broker in his company. After completion of my studies I was presented with the opportunity to purchase the business in its entirety. At this stage it was a small book of mortgage and asset finance clients based predominately in Adelaide,” he says.

“It wasn’t that long ago that I didn’t even know what a mortgage broker was. I did know, however, that I didn’t want to be an accountant – the career path that I had so promptly chosen out of high school. I always knew that I wanted to have my own business. I remember when I was about 12 or 13 I would think up elaborate business ideas complete with business names, and business plans, and present them to my father who to this day is my greatest business mentor.”

Having set about establishing Finestream’s

“It wasn’t that long ago that I didn’t even know what a broker was. I did know, however, that I didn’t want to be an accountant”

– MATTHEW FORD, FINESTREAM GROUP

reputation, Ford took client feedback on board and decided to do things differently. Complaints about the duplication of paperwork that was required when dealing with various different finance professionals led him to test the one-stop-shop idea – incorporating broking, accounting, business advice and financial planning under one roof.

“The response I received was astronomical, with clients explaining how much easier this would make dealing with the financial requirements of life. Through this, Finestream Group was formed,” he says. “With each business unit supporting the next, and all the while focused on a framework of exceptional customer service, the business has grown organically and exponentially. We have beaten a down market by adjusting our business to be so dynamic that every Australian is now a potential client.”

NAME: BRUCE PODGER
COMPANY: AUSSIE
LOCATION: SOMERVILLE, VIC

Thirty-year-old Bruce Podger has been in the mortgage broking game since August 2011, and has got off to a flying start – settling \$24m in loans in his first year. His was an unconventional route into the industry, having previously run his own café business, but the lure of flexible hours and being able to help people achieve their home ownership goals led him to take up a mortgage broking role with Aussie.

When asked about his career goals, Bruce is ambitious and to the point: “To have a loan



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book of \$100m by the end of my third year as a broker". That gives him until August 2014 to hit his target.

In terms of the profession's future, Bruce is optimistic that meeting the needs of busy customers will continue to be the mortgage broker's domain. "I see the industry growing as competition in the market grows. Customers are getting busier and busier in the world these days. Having a broker one-stop shop makes the time involved in researching different home loans a lot simpler and easier for customers," he says. "Being a successful broker in my opinion is about customer service. If you look after your customers they will refer you to others."

NAME: JUSTIN VELLA
COMPANY: BERKELEY CAPITAL PARTNERS
LOCATION: MELBOURNE, VIC



Twenty-five-year-old Justin Vella has some phenomenal figures to back up his claim to being one of Australia's Young Guns. Over the past 12 months he has settled approximately \$65.5m in loans – \$59.5m in the commercial sector, and \$6m in

residential transactions. He's one of a new breed of mortgage broker who has entered the industry straight from university with a finance qualification (Bachelor of Business, Banking and Finance) already under his belt. In fact, Vella couldn't even wait for graduation to get his foot in the door, joining Berkeley Capital Partners' Work Integrated Learning program while still an undergraduate.

"The position was part-time and it gave me an opportunity to understand and get a feel for the industry first-hand while allowing me to complete my degree," he explains. "Upon completion, I worked towards the necessary minimum requirements to become accredited. I have been trained via an accelerated training program under principal Brett Hartwig,

supported by my other colleagues, in both the commercial and residential sectors."

He has since worked on a wide range of transactions, including residential and commercial property purchases and developments, cash-flow lending, trade finance, foreign exchange, equipment finance and refinances varying in complexity and size.

"Berkeley Capital Partners has provided me with the opportunity and exposure to complex commercial and property transactions allowing me to develop my skills and excel in the industry. As debt arrangers and advisors, with \$500m-plus under management, I always felt Berkeley Capital Partners would give me great exposure to the finance industry. Our client base is broad and has a variety of high net worth corporate, commercial and small business relationships held within various industries," he says.

NAME: ASHLEIGH WIGHT
COMPANY: DIVERSIFI
LOCATION: NORTH PERTH, WA

Diversifi's Ashleigh Wight attained her Australian Credit Licence and became an MFAA broker at the age of 23, and within four months had already found herself in fourth place on Choice Aggregation Services' monthly list of mortgage brokers who had attained the highest number of individual loan approvals.

"I then jumped to second position in WA the following month and simultaneously was awarded a Bronze Award for settling over \$2m of loans. December 2012 saw another monumental month, with me settling over \$4m of loans," she says. "My milestone months of September and October 2012 also saw Diversifi achieve record numbers of group loan approvals, totalling over \$36m."

All up, eight months down the line, Wight had \$14m of unconditionally approved loans to her name, and settlements that were just shy of the \$10.3m mark. At the same time, she was announced as one of the five finalists in Australia for the MFAA's Achievement Award for brokers who have less than four years' experience in the mortgage



“Clients want a broker who has patience and is willing to hold their hand through the process”

– ASHLEIGH WIGHT, DIVERSIFI

industry. Still just 24 years old, her enthusiasm is palpable.

“The honour in being named a finalist is truly a feeling that has been indescribable! I love what I do, but there has been a lot of hard work involved, with wonderful support from my principals, so I can honestly say that this accolade is a true testament of my commitment to a successful career. For Diversifi, me being named a finalist has instilled their belief there is a place for me to contribute to the industry and represent our brand in a reputable light,” says Wight.

When it comes to maintaining her reputation, Wight believes that service, patience and understanding are key.

“Clients want a broker who has patience and is willing to hold their hand through the loan process. This makes the world of difference between an exceptional experience with a mortgage broker and a below average experience. Returning phone calls and emails within two hours goes a long way when clients recall the service they received from you,” she says.

In terms of her future goals, Wight plans to establish her own Diversifi franchise within the next four to five years. And with her “love what you do, and you’ll never have to work another day in your life” philosophy, she has every chance of achieving that goal.

In the future she sees technology and internet continuing to evolve, and customers becoming more and more educated on financial alternatives and loan products – as well as realising the importance of using a mortgage broker for gaining unbiased advice.

“With access to lender comparisons, clients can make a more informed decision when choosing which lender to proceed with. With the support of the MFAA, the mortgage industry has seen rapid growth and has become a force to be reckoned with, as more and more consumers are using mortgage brokers, instead of approaching the banks direct,” she says.

NAME: CATALINA MILLA
COMPANY: LOAN MARKET
LOCATION:
MELBOURNE, VIC

Thirty-three-year-old Loan Market broker Catalina Milla regularly settles \$2.5m per month, making her a solid performer in the Melbourne market.

She picked up the idea of taking on broking herself through her work as office manager and PA to a broker. This is where she cut her teeth learning to structure and prepare loans “as well as how to problem solve and work together with the lenders to achieve results”.

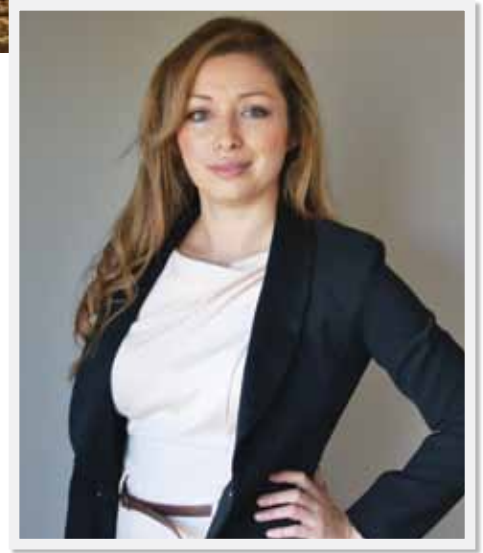
While she has few complaints about her pre-broking career, which provided ample opportunity for teamwork and on-the-job education, there was something missing in Catalina’s eyes.

“The ability to evolve and expand in my career was limited,” she explains. “I had worked very hard for years and found when I became a parent I would have to change careers or begin within another industry. Becoming a mortgage broker allowed me to become mobile and work wherever I am – and take control of my business growth and potential through the amount of effort and hard work I am able to put in.”

Judging from her ethos of keeping in touch with clients regularly, and “knocking their socks off with service”, the amount of effort and hard work she’s able to put in is considerable. “Always place yourself in your client’s position and then structure their loan accordingly,” she says. “There is less need for maintenance in the long run, and it personalises your service to them by really trying to understand how your client wants their loan to function.”

In line with many of our Young Guns, Catalina sees the mortgage industry becoming more regulated in future, but views this as an opportunity for brokers to carve out a niche market in providing the unique capability to offer comparative solutions to clients “rather than limiting the clients’ options to only one lender’s products”.

And in this future she sees herself expanding her business to create a team of loan writers that can provide exceptional service “and an avenue for specialised lending and solution-based lending”.





NAME: MATTHEW EGAN
COMPANY: MULCAHY & CO
LOCATION: BALLARAT, VIC



Twenty-eight-year-old Matthew Egan is going great guns for one so new to the mortgage broking industry. He already settles approximately \$3.25m-worth of loans each month, which equates to annual settlement figures of just under \$40m. He puts his success down to forming strong relationships with clients from a range of different backgrounds and

professions – which helps to diversify his client base.

“These include residential, commercial business owners, investors, self-employed, self-managed super fund lending, and farming primary producers,” he explains. “The diverse nature of my client base means my referrals will come from more than one source, which is vital to my success as a broker.”

He moved into broking to seek a new challenge and step out of his comfort zone. He was working as a lending manager for one of the majors at the time, but decided that he needed to move on to progress his career.

“Taking the biggest risk in my life and leaving my secure surroundings has been the best decision I have ever made in order to progress my career, knowledge and client network,” he says. “My career goals are to maintain strong trustworthy relationships with my clients, which will ultimately lead to longevity in an industry that can be difficult to succeed in.”

As well as getting the basics right – maintaining your level of training and product knowledge and having honest conversations with your clients to earn their trust – always being prepared to challenge yourself is a quality that Egan sees as vital to success.

“Diversify your client base with those who have different lending needs. If you specialise in one area of lending only, the well may dry up on you very quickly. Most importantly, know your customer and what makes them tick. Know what they like to talk about, understand what interests them, and don’t be afraid sometimes to simply have a social conversation with them. The more you know your client on a personal level, the more chance you have of maintaining that relationship, and receiving business from family and friends.”

He believes that unprecedented regulation changes within the industry, such as NCCP and diploma requirements, can only be a good thing. “This makes sure that our industry brokers are of the highest standard, and have the required knowledge to give the advice that we do. I can see further regulation to come; whether that will be a positive or a negative will depend on what will be introduced,” he says.

Egan also expects the volume of loans introduced by brokers over the coming years to steadily increase. “Consumers more than ever are realising the benefit of seeking the best finance offering available to them, rather than traditionally walking into their local bank. Competition in the mortgage market is as intense as it has ever been, and consumers are now more savvy when it comes to seeking that better deal.”

NAME: HAYDEN DEMPSEY
COMPANY: PREMIUM PORTFOLIO FINANCE
LOCATION: PERTH, WA

Twenty-nine-year-old Hayden Dempsey may be new to the broking industry, but in his short time as a broker he has already become the owner of his own practice – Premium Portfolio Finance (PPF). He began his formal training as an accountant and cultivated his talent for sales through roles at the Police and Nurses Credit Society and then as a banker at NAB. At NAB, Dempsey was selected to be part of the National Mobile Bankers Advisory Board and, on average, wrote \$50m per year – exceeding \$20m in some quarters. He was recognised as one of the top 10 mobile bankers for NAB in Australia.

“The structure of your week is pre-booked due to the high level of demand. Targets are set from \$35m up to \$55m per year, depending on how long you have been working for the organisation. The considerable workload makes it increasingly difficult to build rapport as your focus has to be on the new mortgage clients only, and there is a fragile balance between service and productivity. That balance makes it difficult to maintain ongoing satisfaction within the role,” he explains, adding that the high-pressure environment also had its pluses.

“The best experiences were the



colleagues that I met during that time. Whilst mobile bankers are generally incentivised from an individual target, everyone banded together to help a new entrant and teach them the ropes. It's a tough job without support, as the majority of our time was spent in client's homes in the evening; it was comforting to know you always had three or four other bankers working the same hours should you need to talk through a scenario."

In May 2012, Dempsey used his eight years of experience in the finance sector as a springboard for making the jump into mortgage broking, and formed PPF from the ground up. Thanks to ex-colleagues and his aggregator Finsure, he has built up a sound referral base which continues to grow as his reputation for quality service spreads. He has settled approximately \$15m in mortgages for the financial year to date, and has set a budget per loan writer of \$25m–30m per year.

"I decided to move into broking due to the clients' demand to be cared for after funding. This wasn't part of the primary job role in the bank. You learn so much about a particular customer to the point that you are thinking about them and wondering how they're doing two or three years later, when you may not be working for that organisation in that timeframe.

"The product options available to a broker are incredible. There is a deal out there for everyone and I find it just takes the right approach and knowledge to place a customer with a suitable solution."

Vital to Dempsey's business model are the strategic alliances that he has formed with a number of likeminded professionals across different, but aligned, industries. He has made a proactive effort to source leads and business from financial planners, real estate agents, marketing campaigns and social networking.

Dempsey's passion for PPF is fuelled by the belief that brokers should provide clients with the service of their own personal bankers who can move with them through their financial goals and life changes. It is this which sets him the ultimate goal of setting PPF apart from other brokering practices by providing long-term solutions.

"My career goals involve building a sustainable business where we can implement a retention model then add to our service offerings. The clients that we manage under our portfolio will grow with us and we plan to be around for them through these changes. We already have strategic alliances with financial planners and insurance specialists, however we are looking forward to seeing these relationships develop over the years and developing market presence with likeminded organisations. For now, I'm excited to assist each client in making the most informed choice about their finances."

NAME: BRENDAN HAWE
COMPANY: ECHOICE
LOCATION: NEWCASTLE/HUNTER, NSW

Irishman Brendan Hawe wouldn't have entered the Australian mortgage broking market if he hadn't fallen in love with an Aussie girl back home and followed her to these shores.

Having worked in an accounting practice in Dublin, Hawe's introduction to the mortgage market came as a telemarketing consultant with Firstfolio. "My best experience from my time as a telemarker pre-qualifying leads was helping people achieve their goals and the sense of satisfaction you get from this," he says.

Hawe's strong work ethic saw him take evening and weekend shifts, and he often set the bar for the number of appointments booked and conversion rates. This ambitious approach to his work saw him promoted to loan consultant, initially on the My Rate/wholesale account, and later as an eChoice phone broker. During this time, Hawe picked up his Certificate IV in mortgage broking, became an MFAA member and obtained numerous bank accreditations. He's now been broking since October 2011.

On a personal level, Hawe got married, started a family and decided to escape the big smoke – trading Sydney for Newcastle. He's now a home loan manager, receiving eChoice leads for client appointments while also building his own local network.

He now settles \$3m–4m per month in loans over the phone, and wrote just under \$39m in mortgages during 2012. "My career goals are to grow my business here in the Newcastle/Hunter region and build the eChoice brand up here into one of the local market leaders," he says.

"The eChoice model is great because it is flexible. I'm based in Newcastle as an on-ground and phone broker. I'll be given leads in the Newcastle area where I can go and visit and the client for the initial consultation. I'll also be given phone-based leads where I can take the appointment over the phone and send quotes or comparisons by email."



NAME: AARON CHONG
COMPANY: ACE CAPITAL
LOCATION: MELBOURNE, VIC



Mortgage broking runs in the family for 26-year-old Aaron Chong. His father is also a broker, and watching dad go about his work convinced Chong to join the family business. “I thought I’d help him out with that, it was something I was interested in doing and it turned out to be a good move,” he says.

His route into the trade is a familiar one, having spent some time working for a national bank before deciding to take a more personal approach to business. “I’ve always wanted to do things for myself and play a more active role, and that’s why

I got out of it,” he says. “It gives me a chance to get out there and do something more proactive.” But he does admit that mortgage broking isn’t as easy as it seems.

“It’s actually quite complicated. You really want to do the right thing by the client, and there are a lot of different angles to it. But I’m glad I made the move.” His 2012 settlement figure of just under \$30m suggests it’s a move that’s paying dividends.

Perhaps less conventional, but useful nonetheless, is his other pre-broking career as a lawyer for ASIC. Chong concedes, however, that his ASIC experience is “more of a background thing” rather than being something that helps him with the day-to-day tasks of broking.

Looking ahead, he predicts that brokers will score a larger share of the market as time goes by. “But what I’ve also noticed is that people are willing to change their broker. A lot of the clients I have used to use other brokers.”

One of the key complaints he hears is that brokers don’t maintain the ongoing relationship with their clients, or don’t have the expertise required to deal with more complicated requests from property investors for example. “Particularly with the prolific investors they need someone who understands how to get the deal across the line.”

NAME: NATHAN TADDEO
COMPANY: STRATEGIC FINANCIAL GROUP
LOCATION: MELBOURNE, VIC



For 27-year-old Nathan Taddeo, joining the financial services industry was almost a foregone conclusion. He grew up surrounded by finance, and ultimately decided to join his father, Frank, at the family-owned Strategic Finance Group. Taddeo has been a loans consultant with the group since April 2011, and has made incredible progress in his fledgling career – settling \$34m in residential loans in 2012.

“Some of my earliest memories are of accompanying my father when he was at Citibank to yum cha business lunches and these encounters sparked my strong interest in the finance industry,” he says. “I tested the waters by taking a different path, studying resource management at university whilst doing as much travelling as I could. But there was no denying that the finance seed had already been planted, as my electives were always chosen around economics and property. I knew it would be silly to not at least give the field a shot.”

He’d initially planned to look at other areas of finance as well as mortgage broking, but found that its challenges and day to day lessons were so satisfying that he never moved on.

“From my perspective, the industry is in complete control of where it heads and how it moves, which is a good thing. There are plenty of positive signs in the market for brokers and because of this I believe that we’ll see the cream rise to the top. Those who really understand not just mortgage broking but finance as a whole are the ones who will thrive. As will those who are able to mix in a bit of creativity on the technology and marketing side,” he says.

Taddeo’s ambition is not to be the biggest, but the best. “There’s nothing more satisfying than knowing you’re doing the right thing for a client who needs and appreciates it,” he explains. “At the core of being a successful mortgage broker is understanding: your clients’ needs, your product offering and how a client’s borrowings may affect their overall financial position.”

NAME: MARK WYLD
COMPANY: MW WEALTH MANAGEMENT
LOCATION: MELBOURNE, VIC

After completing his Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in finance, 29-year-old Mark Wyld made his debut in the finance sector at a boutique financial planning firm. He tried his hand in real estate sales for 12 months before starting up MW Wealth Management in March 2011.

The company started out managing investment portfolios and specialising in SMSFs, but within six months Wyld extended his service offering to debt management. He's a big fan of new and innovative marketing strategies, such as video blogging and inbuilt referral systems into financial and mortgage products, and this approach has seen MW Wealth Management take in more than \$10m in funds under advice and over \$200k in insurance premiums in its first 12 months.

On the mortgage front, Wyld has been engineering specific mortgage products designed to help clients get out of debt faster – and puts the amount that he has managed to wipe from his clients' mortgages in just 12 months at more than \$1.5m. His total settlements over the last 12 months have come in at \$15m.



He believes that trust is crucial to the broker-client relationship. "We do this by benchmarking clients' progress and holding them accountable. With this comes peace of mind for the client that you're the person for the job."

Clearly ambitious, Wyld envisions compounding growth that should see his business grow to accommodate a full-time broker and a financial planner in 2014. He'd like to have 10-plus advisers under his wing in the long term.

Looking ahead, he sees the need for brokers to propose a strong value proposition. "I think the need for personalised service will become more prominent as we enter a more digital world. Clients want to be heard, understood and have peace of mind that their needs are looked after."

NAME: GEORGE SAMIOS
COMPANY: MADD MORTGAGES
LOCATION: EAST BRISBANE, QLD

George is another Young Gun who moved from banking to broking. He started out as a mobile banking manager with Bankwest as a green 20-year-old – he didn't even know what LVR was at the time.

"I sold myself as a salesperson to gain employment," he explains. "I still remember saying to the lady who put me on, 'I don't even care if you don't pay me, I will be number one.' I was extremely motivated and driven, young and mega enthusiastic."

He had previously worked in the cut and thrust world of real estate and, rather confidently, figured that mobile banking would be "a walk in the park". This confidence saw him take the number one spot he craved.

"I don't let anything put me down. When I was a real estate agent, fresh out of school, I used to door knock every day. The rejection keeps me going, I thrive on every 'no' because I know that eventually I will get a 'yes'."

Samios looked at the figures he was settling as a mobile banker (averaging \$8m–9m per quarter) and estimated that he could triple his income by matching that success as a mortgage broker. "I was far too comfortable in that role, I needed to be back on commission and out of my comfort zone," he says.

Now 24, and with \$41m of settlements to his name in 12 months, his goal is to continue expanding the MADD brand, having grown from a one- to three-strong team in the last month. "We have two admin staff and another mortgage broker who sees my vision. For the team we want to settle \$10m per month."

As well as keeping to the basics and being seen by clients, Samios sees a large part of his success having come from learning to diversify to meet community needs. "I became a mortgage broker just to do home loans. I find myself now doing every facet of finance. Don't limit your income by only doing home loans. We do car loans, equipment finance, insurance... We need to be adaptable and open to anything."

