

HOUSE OF CARDS

THE GIFT CARD MARKET HAS EXPLODED DURING PANDEMIC LOCKDOWNS, AND AMONG THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IS PREZZEE'S SMART EGIFT CARD. ALREADY A HIT IN ITS NATIVE AUSTRALIA, CHAIR AND CO-FOUNDER **SHAUN BONÉTT** AND CEO AND MANAGING DIRECTOR **TONY KARP** SAY THE PREZZEE SUCCESS STORY HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.

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Gift cards were once seen as a universal saviour at those benevolent times of the year. More thoughtful and personalised than cash in an envelope but open-ended enough to bestow the recipient with the power of practicality or simply a get-out-of-jail-free card if you just couldn't think of anything else to buy, a gift card was the answer. However as the popularity of gift cards rose, their practicality declined. Before long, every retailer and service provider offered their own branded gift cards redeemable exclusively at that chain or shop. The burden of choice had returned, squarely on the shoulders of the gift giver attempting to shirk it.



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properties and shopping precincts in Australia and New Zealand, a portfolio that's home to a network of retailers from all walks of life.

Shaun also understands the importance of diversification. In 2015, after a pitch by Prezzye creators Claire Morris and Matt Hoggett, Precision Group became the startup's principal investor. "It was a compelling business plan and prototype," he recalls. "I believed in Prezzye and committed to backing their concept all the way."

Supporting it all the way meant assembling a world-class team to make Prezzye the global success Shaun knew it could be.

Heading up the team is former

David Jones executive Tony Karp, who quickly fell in love with the Prezzye concept.

"Precision Group was the landlord of the David Jones store in Adelaide, so Shaun and I have had a longstanding relationship," Tony explains. After he left David Jones, Shaun invited him to assess the future of his new digital gift card business. "I remember at the time Shaun suggested it would possibly be a three-day-a-week role. However, as

Enter Prezzye, the digital gift card that has revolutionised the industry and put choice back in the hands of recipients all over the world. Consumers can buy, send and store Prezzye Smart eGift Cards from an ever-growing range of retailers. The cards can be used online as well as instore and are always as close as your phone. As a digital solution, it's just as easy to send Prezzye cards to thousands of recipients as it is to just one special individual – and they always arrive on time.

Prezzye is also in tune with evolving environmental concerns. The consumer backlash against excess plastic has resulted in seismic shifts in attitudes towards packaging, bags and straws. Each plastic gift card produced emits 32 grams of CO₂ into the atmosphere, so the millions of Prezzye digital gift cards already sold have saved the planet from thousands of kilograms of CO₂.

Best of all, Prezzye's gift cards are entirely customisable. Gift givers can personalise them with video messages or special greeting cards – at no extra charge – to make it super special.

"In every way, Prezzye eGift Cards are the perfect present," says Prezzye Chair and Co-Founder Shaun Bonétt. "They have the personal touch that giving cold, hard cash lacks, and they allow the recipient the pleasure of choosing a gift of their choice as opposed to the ordeal of pretending to be grateful for an unwanted and unloved surprise."

A self-made property investment billionaire, Shaun is a leading proponent of choice. His Precision Group owns and maintains a wide variety of commercial



is the case with everyone who joins Prezzye, you're bitten by the Prezzye bug in no time and begin to see the endless possibilities available to the business."

This embrace of Prezzye isn't limited to the team either: in just five years, Prezzye has ballooned to US\$450 million (A\$620 million) in sales. More than 10 million Prezzye eGift Cards were sold across 2020 and 2021 as consumers faced extensive lockdowns and retail outlet closures.

"What began primarily as a business-to-consumer, app-based product pivoted to building a business product," Tony says. "In the B2C space, volumes rely on key gifting times throughout the year, but Prezzye Business allowed us to become a distributor of gift cards all year round."

Prezzye's US launch in late 2020 was a turning point for the young company. "Launching in the US has been a major reason for the company's stellar growth," Shaun confirms. "American consumers locked down at home during COVID-19 bought more gift cards for presents for friends, family and colleagues."

Major US retailers including Macy's and Uber Eats have joined the Prezzye family after realising, as Tony did, the eGift Card's sizable potential. "We've only just begun building the Prezzye brand, but right now we're really focused on building high-performing teams in our global markets," Tony says of Prezzye's worldwide presence; the UK launch saw high-profile partnerships with local retailers such as Asda, John Lewis and Marks & Spencer. "The global take-up has been even better than we forecast based upon our experience in Australia."

The company's growth beyond its native shores has been a learning experience not only for Prezzye, but also its partners in the buy-now-pay-later sector. "They see the volumes they're achieving in Australia and see the importance of growing these volumes internationally," Tony points out. "We've assisted and enabled that growth for them."

And vice-versa. In mid-2021, Prezzye teamed with Mastercard, the leading global technology and payments company, to take the eGift Card even further. As a Mastercard Digital Rewards Partner, Prezzye will be able to seamlessly deliver its range into the Mastercard rewards and incentives program. "In short, it's a game-changer," Tony says.

What began as a small Aussie startup is now in full scale-up mode. Prezzye now has offices in Australia, New Zealand, the US and the UK, and

employs more than 150 people globally. Internal forecasts put sales for this financial year in the neighbourhood of 20 million eGift Cards, and Shaun says it is on track to meet that target.

"Prezzye has quadrupled its revenues over the past year, and it's on track to triple again this financial year," he shares. "We'll invest in parts of the business that have been successful – and turbocharge it."

"We already have more than 15 per cent of the addressable digital gift card market share in Australia, and our aim is to expand into more regions, including Canada and Europe," Tony reveals. "We also intend to launch the global Prezzye card, which will allow you to shop and gift from any of our regions regardless of the currency in which the card is issued."

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It is moves like these that Tony believes will realise his and Shaun's vision for the company's future. "Prezzye will become synonymous with global gifting," he predicts.

"We allow people to connect with family, friends and colleagues anywhere in the world, and when you overlay the ability to personalise what you're sending, adding the human interaction, then the recipient can pause and feel connected and happy. It's something that really counts in this pandemic-affected world."

For Shaun, Prezzye's ongoing success is a testament to his eye for opportunity. "A good business opportunity is one that aligns with the individual's passion," he says. "I'm a passionate Chair and Co-Founder with internal motivation towards building a bright future for Prezzye as the next Australian unicorn." ■