



## Perkler NOW In Public Beta! An Interview With Co-Founders Justin Barrie And Dan Bisa!

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[Perkler](#), a [Manuka ACT](#)-based startup just recently went into **PUBLIC BETA** and we were able to get an email interview with co-founders [Justin Barrie](#) (Chief Marketing Officer) and [Dan Bisa](#) (CEO)

• What are [perkler.com](#)'s co-founders doing when they're not working on [perkler.com](#)?



**Justin:** We've been building Perkler for over 12 months now and have been on it pretty much full time. We have just gone live with our public beta and are meeting with clients all of the time, so there is no way other than full-time to run it properly. I ran my own design consultancy for the past five years and previously have continued to do some small jobs with key clients there just to keep cash flow going - we are self-funded after all!



**Dan:** Like Justin I consider myself full time on Perkler. On top of that I spend a small amount of time managing my hotel and serviced apartment business. But for us the focus is Perkler, our 'old' businesses are just kept ticking over. We intend to open up the site to the US market in early 2009, so we need to be all over this thing to do that and service our growing Australian users and clients.

• **Any new games/sports/hobbies you would like the world to know about?**

**Dan:** Everyone in the Perkler office (including CTO Adam Cooper) ride mountain bikes and have been doing 12 and 24 hour races for years. If anyone out there has ever thought of doing one - you won't be disappointed.

**Justin:** I'd just like to offer a health warning. With three kids a new Nintendo Wii was a welcome addition to our home last week. Just

make sure when you load up Wii Sports that your four year old understands about other people's backswings! Mine didn't and has a cracker of a Wii Remote shaped black eye, courtesy of a young mate of his...

• **The story on your site talks about an iPod offer that your co-founder found AFTER he had bought one for \$400, can you elaborate on that story?**

**Dan:** I suppose I have to take this one. When we set up the office all three of us combined our music collection, so suddenly we had a mac mini with 120gb of songs in it. I was about to head off to Japan for a ski trip and thought I should get an ipod that would fit the whole collection. We had been working solidly on the Perkler idea for quite a few months and really getting to know the market inside out. We hadn't yet built a prototype of our search engine with any meaningful data though. So to find the iPod I went to every website of the loyalty programs I am a member of. Searched each of their sites and came up with nothing.

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After boring Justin and Adam with my rant about lack of iPods in my programs I went ahead and bought one from an online retailer. The next part of the story is absolutely true. The day the ipod got delivered to the office I sat down in my chair and unwrapped it. I moved my in-tray to make room and on the top of it was a hardcopy catalogue from my credit card program. I looked in the catalogue and the very same iPod was there for points. Just slightly furious... Went back to the site and it still wasn't there - even though it was in the hardcopy. I got duded but we managed to undertake a use-case scenario and market validation in one painful step!

• **How did the [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) concept start?**

**Justin:** Similar story actually. Dan had just completed his MBA and we decided to get together once a week to talk about something that wasn't related to his business or mine. A bit of a brainstorming / problem solving session to keep us fresh. At the time I was travelling a

lot from Canberra to Brisbane for one of my clients. As my parents live on the Gold Coast I would stay with them and then drive up to the city for work. I told Dan about my frustration at having to do so much research myself to find the best deal on the hire car.

When you combined my two frequent flyer programs, NRMA card and all of the other rewards cards I had, I had to go to too many sites just to find the best offer. And these weren't best prices - they were entitlements because I was a loyal customer. As I described the situation we knew we had a substantial consumer frustration to solve - so we set about doing it.

- **How long has [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) been in existence?**

**Dan:** The 'hire car' moment was 18 months ago. We set about learning as much as we could about loyalty and rewards and met regularly to continue the development of our ideas. In November 2007 we formally set up the company and started working full-time on the project. Adam joined us full-time as CTO early in 2008.

- **What is [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) in one sentence?**

**Justin:** Put simply [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) is THE online community for loyalty and rewards and the people who love them

## **...is THE online community for loyalty and rewards and the people who love them...**

- manage, discuss and rate your programs from the smallest local to the biggest global in one online place and mobilise them via your phone.

- **Who are [perkler.com](http://perkler.com)'s target market?**

**Dan:** Good question. Loyalty crosses over every major demographic. Think of any retailer selling any commodity and they are likely to have a program of some description. So our target market covers any member of any program. And that's a lot of members. In the US there are 1.3 billion memberships of loyalty programs ranging from grocery, to speciality retail, to airlines and hotels.

Even though we allow for every program to be in the Perkolator (our search engine), we are concentrating our efforts for here and the US on retail in particular. This is an area that allows us to really make use of the geocoding we have done and make our iPhone and Android apps really fly.

**Justin:** So in terms of users, because of the retail focus, we are looking at 18 - 40 year old women as a focus (a wide age group we know but loyalty is more about brands than pure demographics) and also concentrating on Over-50 seniors for a lot of our services based programs. But everyone is welcome and everyone will find something! We start with the Australian market and will be moving into the US quickly in early 2009.

• **How many are currently on the [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) private beta? How soon are you going to public beta?**

**Dan:** We've had 25 concerted testers in the Private Beta for a couple of months now. They've taught us a lot about the product and they range from brand experts to retail experts and consumers. We're also lucky to have some pretty solid tech friends who've been in there having a play as well. As well as the 25 that we've targeted and let in another 100 or so people have signed up without any PR or advertising. We went public just this week, so this interview is the scoop! Get in there!

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• **That's exciting - what are your plans for the next few months?**

**Justin:** Firstly to get live and get users in there. In the lead up to Christmas we hope everyone gets their virtual wallet set up to get the most from this time of year. Presents, holidays and general frivolity can add up - Perkler should help people make some pretty good savings and find things they love.

**Dan:** So that's the first aim. Get users in Australia in there. We've also had strong interest in the site from the US and really different places like Germany, so we'll be quickly building the database to take on the US market in the New Year and prepare ourselves for other markets as well - who knows where our users will take us. The US is a priority though. We have a fantastic trip to Silicon Valley in October. We ended up in meetings with some pretty significant industry players (investors and potential clients) so we want to get back over there and transform the biggest loyalty market in the world. We plan to hit New York and the West Coast again in March 09. On the home front we are already

meeting with retailers here to build our local client base so that is progressing well also.

- **What is [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) built on? Do you also code for [perkler.com](http://perkler.com)?**

**Justin:** As CMO I am in no position to answer this question, but I'll have a go! Adam says it is built mainly on coffee...he has built the site on a LAMP stack. Dan and I don't code. We have spent many months in data entry and analysis but keep ourselves to the excel end of things.

- **How would you be measuring client intake for [perkler.com](http://perkler.com)? Is this something your team will build?**

**Dan:** Users (or 'perklers') will always get free access to the community - solving the consumer problem was and is our driving force. For us, clients are the program providers. Retailers, marketing companies and big points program owners. Our hope is to facilitate a community that not only helps consumers but aims to improve the loyalty market in general. More targeted, relevant perks. Better value and true recognition of loyal consumers. But to create this change we want to work with program owners, not against them.

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We've built a pretty comprehensive back-end that will cope with online program management, member touch tools and data analysis - we think this places us well to get a significant number of clients on board.

**Justin:** As far as measuring our intake of users - that is crucial as the community needs to drive this. There will be two kinds of users. Those that just use the generic search engine and that's fine. Not everyone wants to jump in the community. We will measure the use of the Perkolator to see what percentage do this. For community members, they have to register and set up a virtual wallet (a quick and easy process of just two minutes) so we have built a range of data capture points to measure how many people come in and what they do while they are in there - this will tell us a lot about what features people find useful.

• **Who would be competing for [perkler.com](http://perkler.com)'s business? This seems to be a very niche market, would you say you have a [blue ocean strategy](#)?**

**Justin:** Loyalty is a niche and the site won't be for everyone but having said that, in tough economic times every consumer should be trying to get better prices and perks - so we think the timing is right to take loyalty mainstream. In our ideal world everyone should be using the Perkolator to become aware of their entitlements when they are thinking about purchasing. It even comes before price matching or price comparison because these are entitlements you already have. And while the concept of having a deep knowledge of loyalty and rewards may appear niche we cut across every consumer vertical - so that niche contains millions of people worldwide.

**Dan:** That's right, and so from that perspective we do have a blue ocean strategy. We think enabling consumers to search and manage all of their programs fundamentally transforms the current loyalty market. That doesn't mean we don't have competitors though. Everyone from large search engines and current travel and airline sites could play in this space. As will the current loyalty program marketing companies.

Our difference is that we are independent and have a much more global view of the market. The loyalty market is extremely complicated, with parent/child relationships and deep data (just 580 Australian programs led to a database of over 160,000 perks).

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We've spent a long time understanding this to ensure a great user experience but also to make our product strong against potential competition.

- **What is your definition of entrepreneurship?**

**Justin:** Okay - how to answer this without sounding like a jerk...I think entrepreneurship is the ability to identify a need, create preferred outcomes and build a business to deliver the to the people who had the need. How's that?

**Dan:** Ahh...my wife would say “a person who works absurd hours for no money”!

- **If you could time travel, what would you have done with [perkler.com](http://perkler.com) differently?**

**Dan:** I think we are pretty happy with how we've gone about this. If anything we might have got Adam in full-time quicker. He started on contract building a prototype and we knew straight away he was destined to be a key team member, so having him full-time immediately would have been nice. Having said that getting him on contract turned out the be way better than the other options.

**Justin:** Yeah - I agree. Lots of things that we've done like going to Silicon Valley with [ANZA Technology Network](#) in October might have seemed like a risk because we are so early, but they have paid off for us big time. Maybe one thing I would have done differently is just donated to Movember instead of growing the Mo!

- **Any encouraging words for future Aussie start-uppers? Why is Australia a great place for a startup?**

**Justin:** I think that everything we heard in the Valley about how business should run, what VCs and other investors are looking for, can be developed here. Being lean, being innovative and being focussed go hand in hand with starting in a small market like Australia. Also, Australia is full of lots of people who have done it all before in lots of markets and have come home or moved here.

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They are much more accessible here than in big cities over there. And I would encourage every start-up to get away from the desk and meet up with people and build a network.

**Dan:** Yep - network, network, network!



Check [Perkler](#) out and sign up now for a **public beta**!

Available online at: <http://www.technation.com.au/2008/11/19/scoop-perkler-now-on-private-beta-heres-an-interview-with-co-founders-justin-dan/>