

Wanted: Entrepreneurs who Can Run Their Own Cellphone Franchise

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THINK you can do better marketing Telecom's XT mobile network than Richard Hammond or Paul Reynolds?

Want to go into business, but don't fancy owning a corporate cab?

If the answer to both those questions is "yes", Australian telecommunications company **Telcoinbox** may have the perfect opportunity. The company has set up shop in Wellington, offering budding entrepreneurs the chance to create their own mobile phone company through a wholesale deal it has struck with Telecom.

Franchisees come up with their own brand, set their own pricing, and must win their own customers. **Telcoinbox** provides technical support to customers through a call centre in Sydney and handles billing, and payments to Telecom.

Telcoinbox New Zealand chief executive Shannon Fisher said the company had about 60 franchisees in Australia - most were individuals in business on their own for the first time - and a similar number of larger resellers such as information technology companies and phone dealers.

Despite having two middlemen between phone users and the network provider, margins in the mobile industry were such that some Australian franchisees had attained the easy life, working two days a week and playing golf for the rest, he said.

Telcoinbox lets franchisees wholesale fixed-line and broadband services as well as XT connections and Mr Shannon said that as a rule of thumb sole traders would need about 200 to 250 customers placing all their business with a franchise to make a good living.