

Victory duo move to a winning position

By MATHEW CHARLES

WHEN Tony Cassar and Gino Venegas bought Victory Blinds, about the only things they kept were the infamous jingle and some valued staff.

"We won't get rid of that jingle, even though it drives people crazy," Mr Cassar said.

He and his partner, Mr Venegas, acquired the company in 1993 — the fourth owners since 1988.

Their experience proved tough.

"The business name was great in the public eye, but in the industry it was shot," Mr Cassar said.

"No one would supply us with any goods, no one would give us any advertising, every TV station snubbed us.

"Landlords snubbed us ... in the beginning we had the sheriff visit us every single day.

"He would say 'excuse me but we have to take that desk'."

Mr Cassar believes the jingle was the main reason for the company's high public profile.

"The previous owners pumped a lot of money into advertising, which benefited us."

The partners dedicated themselves to rebuilding the company's foundations.

"We invested more in product, started investing in products that were better manufactured and made from better quality materials, which is a savings because you don't have to revisit to fix anything."

Mr Cassar, an interior decorator, and Mr Venegas, an accountant, soon transformed the business.

"We had to change the culture completely, and that was a very big task," Mr Cassar said.

They cut back the company's 16 stores to six but increased staff numbers from about 60 to 130, and boosted turnover to \$50 million plus.

"We are not in the blinds business anymore, we are in the heat and light control and fashion business."



Seeing the light: Tony Cassar and Gino Venegas have rebuilt their company's foundations. Picture: LUZIO GROSSI

The partners emphasise customer service and good employee relations above all else.

To improve customer service their sales staff wear gloves and "grandfather" slippers so as not to dirty people's homes, and carry vacuum cleaners, too.

The partners agree the company would have folded long ago without the dedication of their staff.

"A lot of them treat it like a family. We have to kick them out to get them to go home. We are very, very proud of them."