

# Going global - Striving to be world class

Maintaining such an international outlook is a test for companies everywhere, but New Zealand's relative isolation means even our most savvy business leaders aren't always as well exposed to global trends and impacts as their competitors.

And while a number of attributes have been identified by international experts that executives can develop to greatly enhance this type of 'global mindset', what is missing is a New Zealand perspective.

That's why a unique consortium appointed by New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) is putting together a sophisticated, globally focused leadership programme aiming to transform how our leading executives and their businesses think, operate, and lead in global markets.

The University of Auckland Business School and business growth centre The Icehouse have teamed up with internationally-recognised executive education provider Thunderbird School of Global Management to develop this new global mindset leadership programme.

The idea is to help experienced executives develop an even deeper understanding of the capabilities and confidence required to succeed globally.

We also want to arm them with disciplined, informed and reflective approaches to the way they make strategic decisions about their businesses. Embedding these practical skills and this thinking within their businesses will help to improve our exporters' overall confidence for global expansion.

Over time the vision is for the programme itself to become a world-leading executive education initiative. After all, the idea of being truly world class doesn't rest solely with our exporters, but also with public and private service providers.

Luckily there are a number of New Zealanders who can be looked on as role models in a range of fields already. This year's line up of World Class New Zealand Award winners is a good place to start.

Most of us are probably aware of Trade Me founder Sam Morgan's entrepreneurial streak and many will have heard of Villa Maria winery's Sir George Fistonich. Others who have been recognised in this year's awards include Emeritus Professor Bob Elliott of pioneering biotechnology company Living Cell Technologies and Michael Stedman of the creative force that is Natural History New Zealand.

Obviously some very different stories sit behind their success in what are very different industries. What is common to them all is an eagerness to compete on the global stage, an evolving understanding of what that actually requires, and a willingness to share that knowledge with other New Zealanders.

Another great example of this sort of motivation is the network of more than 80 executives and business experts who are members of NZTE's Beachheads advisory

boards around the world. These are people who have 'been there and done that' when it comes to a myriad of different aspects of doing business internationally.

Many of these expert advisors aren't even New Zealanders based overseas. They are foreigners who have recognised the potential of our businesses and country and want to do something to help us make the most of our strengths and overcome our weaknesses.

In a world competing for skills and attention, building on this sort of affection for and interest in New Zealand is going to be a vital part of the race to be a truly world class country.

*This column first appeared in the National Business Review on 18 February 2011.*

Source: NZTE