

# Firms that go green, grow green

Nelson participants in a national green challenge see sustainability as a win-win for business, as **Kirsty Quickfall** discovers.

**I**N MY 15 or so years of gainful employment, I have been fortunate to be tasked with “greening” the business I’m working for. I’m not talking sensible stuff like double-sided printing or teeny-weeny rubbish bins on desks – I’m talking big picture stuff.

Back in Britain, working for British Gas, I was involved with “re-energising” whiteware that traditionally had been sent to a landfill. In New Zealand, working for the Kaikoura District Council, I was responsible for implementing Zero Waste and Green Globe initiatives district-wide – no mean task, I can tell you.

The commonality between the two positions is simple – a sustainable business is good business. It’s common sense, really. It doesn’t matter if it’s a local authority or a small business or a multinational business, your bottom line can be significantly improved by sensible, sustainable business practices.

It came as no great surprise to me that recently, five out of 16 southern and central regional Sustainable Business Network Award finalists came from the Nelson region. That’s pretty good going, considering that the



entrants in the Get Sustainable Challenge Awards stretched from the greater Wellington region to Bluff.

Anita Newport, of Parkes Automotive in Motueka, a business that reached the national Sustainable Business Network finals, says: “We

wanted to manage a business that would meet our families’ needs without compromising the happiness and wellbeing of our staff, customers, community or the environment.

“Being recognised at the SBN awards means that we are on the right track, and we hope what we have done will motivate others and

prove that anybody with commitment and dedication can make a difference.” Vote for them at sustainable-awards.org.nz.

I asked another finalist from Nelson, Alisdair Daines, from Daines Architects, what drove his business to enter the awards.

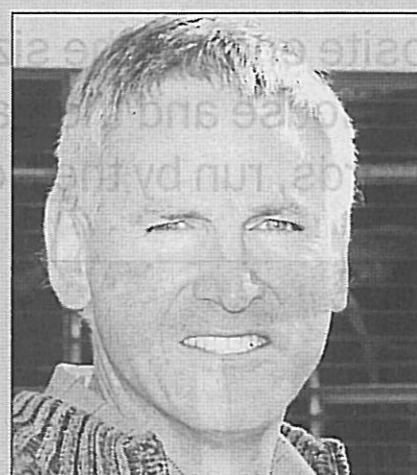
“To me, a sustainable business is the

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**A sustainable business effectively future-proofs the business.**

**DAVID HILL**



**Anita Newport:** Hopes Parkes Automotive will motivate others.



**Alisdair Daines:** Sustainability is just common sense says the architect.



**David Hill:** The Richmond Mall manager wants to make ideas flow.



**Katy Steele:** The Nelson Environment Centre is “walking the talk”.

future,” he said. “Changing our way of operating has improved our bottom line performance and provided a much better working environment for our clients and staff.

“We chose to enter the Get Sustainable Challenge as a measure of how we were performing: what we were doing well and what we could improve on.

“Being selected as a finalist really took us by surprise. It was reassuring to know we were doing some things well, but it also opened my eyes as to further things we can do and improvements that can be made.”

What his business is doing in terms of sustainability is just common sense to Alisdair. His achievements are fantastic, but this way of thinking is

certainly not common sense to many businesses. Some trudge along without even looking at how simple changes could improve staff commitment and their financial bottom line.

David Hill, manager of Richmond Mall, who got a personal commendation at the awards, explains. “A sustainable business effectively future-proofs the business. Sustainable initiatives have to have and show quantifiable improvements to the bottom line, the environment and the community – the challenge is to do this in the business framework. Initially, it is a mindset change to the way you see the business, then the ideas start to flow.”

Richmond Mall has saved a whopping \$120,000 in the past 18 months by

adopting a sustainable business attitude – no-one can argue that this isn’t good business practice.

The next time you visit the mall, think about the toilet paper you use (should you visit the facilities), the lighting and air conditioning, and the water captured and reused to flush the toilets, and you’ll get an idea of why the mall is “leading the way”.

A further local finalist is the Nelson Environment Centre. They have naturally adopted a sustainable business attitude as part of their core business. They were narrowly beaten to the award by Wellington Zoo, which has adopted an impressive array of sustainable initiatives (managing tonnes of poo cannot be easy). However, as Katy Steele says, “under-

taking the Get Sustainable Challenge enables us to measure our performance, and to be able to demonstrate publicly that we’re ‘walking our talk’. Naturally, we had good systems in place to minimise our environmental impacts, but taking the Challenge has enabled us to recognise the hard work that our staff undertake, including all their voluntary work.”

Many local businesses are now ensuring their sustainability. This is great news for our region, great news for our employment figures and great news for our environment. It may be green, but it’s also common sense.

■ Kirsty Quickfall is the Nelson-Tasman regional co-ordinator for the Sustainable Business Network Nelson and Tasman.