

Marlborough ingenuity key to affluence

Michael Berry

Selling ingenious ideas lurking in the background of Marlborough industry is the way the region can change being the lowest wage economy in New Zealand, a Blenheim business consultant says.

Tony Smale, of Forte Management, believes intellectual property is abundant in Marlborough.

He said all that was needed to make money from it was a change in thinking and networking.

Marlburians – like Kiwis in general – are great at coming up with ingenious solutions to create products, yet rarely make money by selling the solution as well as the products, he said at a Marlborough Chamber of Commerce focus group meeting yesterday.

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Forte Management

aquaculture production and quality management techniques and technology which overseas companies would pay handsomely for, he said.

Other industries such as forestry and wine had similarly valuable assets and methods.

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Last week it was reported that figures released by employment

website Seek.co.nz showed Marlborough was the lowest-paid region in the country with an average wage of \$52,785.

The numbers were based on job listings on the website between September to November.

“You could question their methods, but not their conclusion,” Mr Smale said.

Marlborough would find government officials sympathetic to selling intellectual property if the idea was raised, he said.

He knew people in Marlborough

who had the ideas and needed only the right kind of backing.

He asked the Marlborough Chamber of Commerce to help.

Chamber general manager Brian Dawson agreed to meet with Mr Smale and brainstorm possibilities.

Mr Smale said Marlborough was a primary production factory which had a lot of low-wage jobs. Increasing the number of those jobs would not help the low average wage. Different jobs which were higher paying would, he said.

The group also discussed how to benefit from this year’s Rugby World Cup and raised questions about preparations in the area, such as whether there would be a public transport system set up for the duration of the tournament.

Mr Dawson outlined the

chamber’s plans for 2011 and asked the 25 people present for feedback.

“The thing for us to decide is: what’s important and what order do we do it in,” he said.

Mr Dawson said he hoped to start an exporters’ group to assist the many companies which take their products off shore. A meeting of about 20 central business district retailers took place earlier this month and he hoped to continue their co-operation and get them to establish a CBD retailers group soon, he said.

Chamber members would receive a membership card this year, accompanied by a discount book to encourage businesses to spend locally, he said.

The final chamber focus group meeting will be at Youell House, at 9am on Thursday, January 20.

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