



knowledge
wave2003
the leadership forum

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20 February 2003

*Presentation to Knowledge Wave 2003 - the Leadership Forum
February 2003*

"Presentation also available on Forum website - www.knowledgewave.org.nz"

KNOWLEDGE WAVE

Leadership Case Study presentation

by Peri Drysdale

I was asked to make a contribution to the broader debate being had at this conference by sharing insights on leadership, the subject of this conference, from my experiences with Snowy Peak Ltd .

To lead is to guide on a way especially by going in advance.

In the next twenty or minutes or so I will outline what the business of Snowy Peak is, where it started and where it is now, during which I will attempt to answer directly or indirectly a number of the questions asked of me in putting this presentation together. The hardest thing was what to leave out! Twenty two years packed full of learning and experience is tough to summarise in 20 minutes.

The questions asked of this presentation:

1. What lessons can others draw from the successes of Snowy Peak?
2. What is it about your organisation that exemplifies 'leadership' (as distinct from 'success' or 'achievement')?
3. How has leadership been demonstrated within your organisation?
4. Are there ways in which your organisation has led the way for others in your sector or more broadly within New Zealand? What aspects of this broader leadership might others follow?
5. How have you learnt from the leadership of other people, companies or organisations? What new kinds of relationships and ways of working has this stimulated?

Now- about Snowy Peak Ltd....

(video clip)

Bill Clinton was an unforgettable world leader.

You could never pull the wool over his eyes.

His intellect is formidable.

He knew what was good about this world.

He knew a few years ago when he slipped into an Untouched World Mountainsilk polo shirt.

Bill vowed to return one day._

He kept his promise to return to one of our New Zealand stores on May 28 last year and later walked out with his arms full of Untouched World clothes for himself and his family.

Bill's mission to buy our quality products is testament to what we are creating in our company.

We are following a dream of producing the most comfortable, top quality range of sustainable lifestyle clothing of its kind seen on the global market.

Why sustainable? Because someone has to take a lead, someone has to show that big business can be good business, that sustainable business can be profitable business measured by the toughest financial analysts. More than that, it's a highly profitable model for the future that New Zealand has a unique opportunity to take advantage of. An opportunity that so far as a country we haven't had the vision to see.

Snowy Peak Ltd, the parent of Untouched World is a design house, a retail and fashion premium clothing operation with headquarters in Christchurch, which is small in global terms but big in its advances and strong on sustainable ethos.

We have deep passion for what we want to achieve.

Before Snowy Peak I was a health professional specialising in echocardiography. These days I am guided by *my* heart, and together with the awesome people who I am honoured to have work alongside me and beside me in the company we have transformed Snowy Peak from a tiny low tech cottage industry employing outworkers into a thriving high tech international manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing and exporting business.

I didn't know anything about business, was totally naïve. I started 22 years ago with \$200 capital and didn't know the difference between an invoice and statement or a debtor and creditor.

So...how could we get here from that beginning?

Through reading, study and networking, we've taken risks and pushed the boundaries, we've focussed on design, innovation and excellence in product and service, and we've sought out the best in the world to learn from.

We have branded our collections to a point of difference.

SNOWY PEAK, our resort market brand, everywhere people go on holiday, mountain or sea, is Snowy Peak's market.

MERINOMINK is an alluring and cutting edge blend of possum fibre and merino wool. It is such an exciting product - light, warm and so soft.

But the story doesn't end there.

There is a reason for using fibre off the back of the possum which is considered New Zealand's greatest wildlife and ecology threat.

An estimated 70 million possums eat 20,000 tonnes of New Zealand native herbage every night.

Millions of dollars have been spent in attempting to control this environmentally-destructive creature.

In accordance with our ethos and philosophies, our company is committed to a sustainable future to help this country and the planet at large.

We thus persevered back in the early 90's, working with Wools of New Zealand, in knitting the first ever garment in possum and wool, to develop processes to use the

possum's short fibre by blending it skilfully with merino wool and other luxury fibres such as Cashmere.

This is a fibre technically too short to spin, and originating from a wild unfarmed animal created quality standardising issues we had to work hard to find ways to overcome.

This high tech process creates stunning luxury yarns for knitwear and textiles.

Our pioneering work for superfine worsted yarns needed for luxury possum wovens was done in Japan using technology we don't have here in New Zealand.

In Paris last week the exquisite fabrics we have created with our Japanese partners Hayazen Woollen Mills, was shown at Premier Vision. This work was led by Snowy Peak Japan, and has been a huge example of major co-operation between Japanese spinning and weaving companies and us here in New Zealand.

By using possum fibre, we estimate we have saved over 70 million tonnes of native herbage, protecting our biodiversity at the same time.

There are now twenty two companies in New Zealand using possum/merino blends, an industry Wools of New Zealand credited Snowy Peak with establishing, an industry that has been estimated to be worth around 100 million NZD with a potential to get to 200 million in the near future.

This leads us to our most visible brand in New Zealand.

UNTOUCHED WORLD™, New Zealand

Untouched World is about *freedom of spirit, go anywhere, do anything, be you*

at its core, clothing with style and simplicity, clothing that is comfortable, flexible, durable and fabulous looking, that has the ability to be in the high country, downtown, out on the Hauraki Gulf or in the most elegant wine bar.

Clothing that is made from natural fibres, combining great tradition of 150 years of wool growing with modern technology to create astonishing fabrics, clothing that allows a freedom of spirit, follows what you do...

along with the clothing is an amazing set of products that connect with people who have an active global lifestyle...

essentials that will be the first things you grab, pack, save, give

...unique, quality products that are sustainably produced, with a strong commitment to ethical business practice...

and there is the Untouched World foundation, targeting education, environment and cultural understanding with its Blumine Island foundation

Untouched World is a New Zealand lifestyle brand...

At the front of a new wave for simple, sustainable products and services.

The Untouched World logo is derived from the Maori kite. Depending on how these kites moved in the air omens about the future were read. The kite is a perfect outcome of an art and natural materials, human skill and nature, and symbolises freedom, all that Untouched World stands for.

Untouched World was launched in 1998 in a 5000 square foot retail store and award winning native garden restaurant in Roydvale Avenue in Christchurch, and in September 2001 the Queenstown store and a few weeks later Auckland store were opened.

We were delighted Auckland awarded us, a mere South Island company, the 2002 Best Fashion Store in the Top Shop Auckland awards on the anniversary of our opening.

In 2002 we launched Untouched World at Walter Peak, a unique two night three day eco adventure guided trek through the back of Walter Peak Station staying in restored musterers huts. This is the Untouched World brand in action.

We are now doing the foundation work ready to take Untouched World offshore, the plan for Untouched World that it be a global brand about New Zealand, rather than a New Zealand brand, and were encouraged last week by the offers to help received from overseas visitors to the Investment Regatta last week. Another huge step for us, and bigger than we forecast at the outset of developing the brand.

Our company leads in design, in innovation, in market development and in sustainability. Our brands are all market leaders in their respective niches. We've promoted New Zealand around the world for nineteen years, we've brought some of the most powerful people in the business to New Zealand –

from Shozo Honda who was instrumental in Prada becoming in three years no one in the world from a me too fake brand,

Mr Muto, a buying budget of 10 billion NZD, President of Isetan one, if not the, most highly respected and profitable retailer of leading fashion in the world, certainly in Asia, we've brought journalists and we've hosted buyers who have been interested in buying our products and products from other companies.

This is a wonderful country.

Sadly our green, natural image is more of an accident of geography than the result of tough environmental policies.

We need to protect our natural beauty. We were a one-time albatross of isolation and we are less fettered by the crowds you find in other parts of the world.

New Zealand feels a million miles from anything intensely urban.

But we need to become a world leader in sustainable development.

By doing nothing we will find ourselves in a sorry state.

New Zealand has a great opportunity to become a distinctively special country.

Its clean, green natural environment could be a template for the rest of the world to follow.

I agree with Body Shop founder Anita Roddick who said in Auckland last year that New Zealand should stand for environmental purity and capitalise on its natural strengths.

If we had the grit and the courage to use our natural advantage, create a strong vision, and put the energy of the country behind it we could have both the highest standard of living and the highest quality of life in the world.

At our headquarters we make a point with our every moment of considering sustainability.

Our philosophy is through fashion, to show what is possible for people and planet.

We joined Redesigning Resources, a group of 7 pilot organisations in New Zealand and one in Australia working together to pioneer a pathway for organisational sustainability. Our journey of learning has been made available on the web for others to follow. The results of our achievements over the past two years or so were the subject of the recent Redesigning Resources 2002 conference.

At work we have a sustainability team of volunteers from throughout the company, we have put up an internal sustainability notice board that keeps people informed of our progress.

We lent money to our staff to purchase low energy light bulbs and cylinder wraps for their homes, which we sourced for them, a simple but highly effective project that if rolled out to all business nationally would save one whole hydro plant in electricity.

We started Elephant Mondays, where staff bring to work any items they no longer want, and another staff member can take it away for 50 cents or two dollars, the money going to a project to enhance sustainability within the company.

We didn't stop there.

Most of all, we are REDESIGNING the way we use RESOURCES, we are looking at sustainable product development, at the life cycle of the materials we use and the way they are made. In our clothing, our body products, even down to the coffee we buy for our restaurant, suppliers are surprised to be asked what is the source of the bean, how is it grown, what are the work conditions.

We have been in developing great fabrics out of new fibres and materials, using the thousands of years nature has been perfecting solutions as our inspiration and resource. The most well known is our role in the development possum/merino textile industry mentioned already,
And our exciting high performing Mountainsilk fabric that Bill loves so much.

But there are others, equally exciting, such as Ecoproof fabric, a replacement for Gore-Tex type products - more technically perfect, yet its made simply of cotton with high tech engineering in its selection, spinning, weaving and construction.

We focus on making garments in natural materials that can deliver maximum wears per dollar, minimum environmental impact per wear.

We have stepped outside the traditional square and it has been a cathartic exercise.

We feel passionate about creating a business environment where people benefit and our resources use become more sustainable. We are doing this to show that sustainable business can be successful business.

We want to move out to the edge, look out of the frame. We will make people sit up and take notice of our premium brands and sustainable philosophy

New Zealand should not be focussing on growth for growths sake.
We must lead the way in the world and focus on quality of life.

We need to re-engineer this country.

We need to educate the value of good parenting, facilitate and remove the disincentives to it, no amount of schooling will have an impact on a child who's basic needs for love and security are not met.

From there we need to focus on finding out how to get the education levels up, from pre-schooling through primary, secondary, tertiary and ongoing.

We need to pioneer new ways to access children's interest and infinite passion - watching and later hearing how much children got out of the pilot week at Untouched World Foundations Blumine Island project made the spine tingle. There were multiple outcomes from a group of twelve children boys and girls aged 13, 14 and 16 years from six different schools put on an island with only a tap and a toilet, setting up their own camp, cooking their own food, undertaking heavy physical work clambering up the steep island ridges, learning about environmental issues, safety, research work, getting along together, teamwork, leadership - a week that will be a major building block for the future for these children and one they are keen to see repeated for as many children as possible.

Children are our key to a future of leaders to take this country where it has the potential to be.