



knowledge  
wave2003  
the leadership forum

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*Presentation to Knowledge Wave 2003 - the Leadership Forum  
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Presentation also available on Forum website - [www.knowledgewave.org.nz](http://www.knowledgewave.org.nz)

## KNOWLEDGE WAVE 2003 – THE LEADERSHIP FORUM

### THE NEW ZEALAND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Justine Munro

Wednesday 19 February 2003, 1:30pm

#### Introduction

- The Knowledge Wave Conference held in August 2001 reached, as we have heard, a broad consensus:
  - That New Zealand must return to the top half of the OECD in terms of GDP per capita as well as other key measures of societal well-being
- Let us be clear that this is an enormous task.
- The Knowledge Wave Conference in 2001 faced that challenge and generated a large number of innovative ideas on how NZ could lift its performance.
- In the 18 months since that conference, a stream of initiatives and projects have [as we have heard] taken up the Knowledge Wave mantle – [among them the Government's initiatives under its Growth and Innovation Framework; the Knowledge Breakfast educational television series; and] Social Investors New Zealand, the organisation I've helped to drive which provides non-profit organisations with funding and capability-building skills.
- It is all good work, Ladies and Gentleman - but it is nowhere near enough.
- To achieve the growth target we have set requires a nation-wide mobilisation of effort and resources, a groundswell of activity across our economy and community.
- It requires as a start nothing less than that each of us here at this Forum takes personal responsibility for an initiative headed towards this goal.
- Getting NZ back into the top half of the OECD cannot be achieved by the Government, by "senior business leaders", by Peter Jackson – or by any of us in isolation. Achieving this target requires nothing less than the personal commitment and sheer hard slog of each of us.

- This Leadership Forum gives us, as 450 of New Zealand's emerging and established leaders, the opportunity to find at least one initiative which excites us, which we believe has the potential to make an impact, and which we make ourselves publically accountable for driving forward. These initiatives may be as diverse as developing a new high-tech product, initiating a research project, or spearheading policy reform, but together they can initiate the groundswell we need.
- I want now to put before you some provocative thoughts on how each of us can
  - **Get inspired,**
  - **Get connected,** and
  - **Make an initiative happen.**
- These thoughts come from my perspective as one of the Emerging Leaders and as a key driver of Social Investors New Zealand.

## **Get inspired**

- What we each need to find at this Forum is an initiative which inspires us and which has the potential to drive performance step change.
- We should be aware that such an initiative will undoubtedly challenge our pre-conceptions about "how things are" and "how things are done". We're not going to get back to the top half of the OECD with "more of the same" – we need bold, audacious, creative thinking.
- In this, there is an important role for the Emerging Leaders. Our group of 100 younger New Zealanders, born largely from the 1970's onwards, have grown up in a world very different from yours, a world without many of the restrictions which limited the thinking of previous generations. We are a group which doesn't see what No 8 fencing wire has to do with world-class innovation; which never relied economically, or culturally, on the umbilical cord to England; and which has not, for the most part, had its aspirations limited by outdated hierarchies based on age, gender or ethnicity.
- The challenge for you as Established Leaders is to be open to our questions and ideas, not to dismiss them as naive or ignorant, but to allow them to rattle your thinking. Equally, the challenge for us as Emerging Leaders is to be bold, to seize this unique opportunity.
- When it comes to finding an initiative which excites us, we have here at this forum a wealth of opportunities with a world-class array of national and

international speakers, and an exceptional roll call of New Zealand's leaders in many different spheres. Again, I think we, as Emerging Leaders, have a special role to play in our ability to inspire with an idealism and a passion not yet dulled by the "real world".

## Get connected

- As we build our inspiration at this Forum, we need also to reach out, to **connect** with others who share our passion and who are prepared to make the journey with us.
- Taking an initiative from inspiration to execution requires not just one person's commitment, but the input of a whole web of people and organisations – to do the legwork, to advise, to challenge, and to fund.
- As with the Knowledge Wave Conference, this Leadership Forum gives us an amazing opportunity to build a network of people who together can drive these initiatives forward. Let's take advantage of our famed "two degrees of separation" and recognise that the key contacts we need to start to build that network are almost certainly here in this room.
- With Social Investors New Zealand, for example, the Knowledge Wave conference was an invaluable means for the McKinsey consultants first inspired to lead change to go straight to the key people in the non-profit, business and academic worlds who could make these ideas fly. At the conference, we were able to take what was "just an idea" and get a range of inputs which assured us that it had potential. We made connections that let us put together our original Steering Committee as well as our current Board, to access our funding, to build a committed network of business partners, and to look for high-potential non-profits to work with. We were able to shortcut a whole raft of introductions, cold calls and applications, to go straight to a group which shared our passion and were prepared to do the hard yards with us.
- To ensure that this is a conference where those connections happen, I challenge each of us to walk up to at least 3 new people each day of the Forum - to share your passion, to discuss what you have learnt, and to connect each other to yet other people and resources who may be of use.
- In particular, I challenge the Established Leaders to seek us out as Emerging Leaders, to give us a chance to join our passion with the resources and deep networks you can help us to access.

## Make it happen

- And finally, to the hardest and most important part, **making it happen**.
- When we walk out of this conference at 3pm on Friday, each of us should have found an initiative which we have committed to drive forward and have made the connections which will help us do it.
- What we must also walk out with, however, is an attitude which says that **we are personally accountable for making that initiative happen**, whatever the knocks we endure, the tall poppy slayers we encounter, and the time and other pressures we will undoubtedly face. Experience may force us to alter the form of the initiative we are progressing – perhaps drastically – but we remain on the hook to achieve the performance change we signed up for.
- Making it happen is the part that takes place not here at the Forum with all the buzz and promise, but after everyone has gone home; not here at the Sheraton but on the kitchen table after the kids have gone to bed. These are the hard yards, and this is what leaders do to turn idealism into impact.
- It can be done. To take our experience, the commitment we made with Social Investors New Zealand was to drive and stimulate real performance improvements in the non-profit sector.
- We began at the Knowledge Wave Conference with the concept of “social venture capital” – an approach which has gained prominence internationally. Following the conference, we made a commitment to test out the possibility of using this approach in New Zealand, and later went further to commit to actually making it happen.
- That was 18 months ago. We’ve achieved a lot since then – we’ve obtained initial funding, run a successful pilot, and built a high-calibre Board and a committed network of businesses as capacity partners. We’ve also, however, had to face significant challenges – particularly as we seek to take the insights from the international experience and build a model that can work in New Zealand.
- It’s been hard work, and there’s plenty more to come. But what’s kept us going has been our commitment to increase the effectiveness of the non-profit sector, and an attitude that failure is, quite simply, unacceptable.
- What we must also take away from this forum is a recognition that real change requires significant investment of money, not just time and energy. Climbing back into the top half of the OECD cannot be achieved on a shoestring, after hours and out of people’s garages. Building successful social

and economic initiatives requires professional, well-resourced initiatives which are capable of achieving the results we need.

- With Social Investors New Zealand, we've found that individuals and companies are often happy to be generous with their time, but not to stump up with the funds required for successful operations.
- I challenge you all, and in particular, the Established Leaders, to be prepared to invest your money to ensure that you and others can make change happen.

## **Conclusion**

- Fellow leaders, we are in a position right here to begin the campaign to reclaim our place in the top half of the OECD, to build an economy and a society we can be proud of, and to secure for our children and grandchildren the benefits we've enjoyed of growing up Kiwi.
- We have the opportunity to lead a nationwide mobilisation of people and resources, a groundswell that can achieve the massive economic and social performance gains we need.
- Let us seize that opportunity – get inspired, get connected and make it happen.