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Innovative training not luck has made Christchurch Casino the Supreme Award Winner!



IT isn't luck that has made the Christchurch Casino the Air New Zealand Supreme Award Winner in the Tourism Industry Awards announced last night (Thursday). It is innovative workplace training at the heart of its culture. As a result, it reaps the rewards with increased staff loyalty, competitiveness and "customer delight". The awards were organised by TIA and announced in Auckland at a gala event attended by about 360 industry leaders.

The Supreme Award was presented by PM and Tourism Minister John Key to Christchurch Casino, which also won the ATTO Tourism Workplace Training Award. Attendees were told the casino is the city's leading entertainment venue, attracting almost a million visitors a year.

Theme

Innovating for success was the theme of this year's Tourism Industry Awards and the judges say walking around the Christchurch Casino they could feel the culture - "Innovation is across the whole organisation and it shows results."

They say a comprehensive training programme delivered with industry partners gives the almost 600 staff a clear career path and instils greater confidence, especially for those in frontline roles. Staff are encouraged to contribute their own ideas and take the initiative.

CEO Brett Anderson knows every staff member by name and they are all encouraged to contribute their own ideas and take the initiative.

Outstanding

"Christchurch Casino is an outstanding tourism business that clearly shows the link between a quality, innovative training approach and delivering an unforgettable and positive customer experience - win or lose. Its performance is all the more impressive when you consider the highly regulated environment in which it operates," add the judges.

TIA CEO Tim Cossar says he is delighted to see Canterbury take a number of the top tourism awards, and hopes it will give the region a boost in the aftermath of last month's earthquake.

Individuals

As well as the Supreme Award, two prestigious individual awards were won by Cantabrians.

Wally Stone, a founding member and chairman of Whale Watch Kaikoura and past TNZ board member and chairman, won the Horwath HTL Sir Jack Newman Award for his outstandingly innovative contribution to tourism throughout a distinguished career in the industry.

Ryan Sanders, owner and director of Haka Tours, won the PATA Young Tourism Entrepreneur Award. His is a Canterbury-based venture offering visitors guided adventure and snow tours. The entrepreneurial 32-year-old returned from a corporate job in the UK four years ago to start the venture. He recently bought Haka Lodge, a boutique flash-backpacker lodge in Christchurch.

Judges say...

Judges say: "It is great to see that our winners come from regions across the country and range from large companies with hundreds of employees to family run operations. Our inspirational winners show that being small is no deterrent to running a savvy and successful tourism business.

"These tourism operators have successfully come through one of the toughest trading environments on record - they prove that true innovators are still making the money. Innovation is inherent throughout their businesses and is lived and breathed by all their staff."

FULL LIST OF WINNERS:



Air New Zealand Supreme Award, and ATTO Tourism Workplace Training Award - Christchurch Casino, Canterbury
ATTO Tourism Education and Training Award - The International Travel College of New Zealand, Auckland
Westpac Hotel Award - Bolton Hotel, Wellington
Backpacker Award - YHA Wellington Hostel, Wellington
Holiday Park Award - Kennedy Park TOP 10 Resort, Hawke's Bay
Motel Award - Anchorage Motel, Fiordland
Tourism New Zealand Innovative Marketing Campaign Award - Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World, Auckland
Visitor Attraction and Experience Award (Large) - Explore NZ, Auckland
Visitor Attraction and Experience Award (Small and Medium) - Wilsons Abel Tasman National Park, Nelson
Visitor Transport Award - Stray - Adventure Tours, Auckland
Festival/Event Award - Rhythm and Vines Festival, Gisborne
Local Government Helping Visitor Industry Award - Te Kahui Tupua: Sacred Peaks - Ruapehu District Council, Ruapehu
DoC Conservation in Action Award - Lochmara Lodge Wildlife Recovery and Arts Centre, Marlborough
Horwath HTL Sir Jack Newman Award - Wally Stone, Whale Watch Kaikoura, Canterbury
PATA Young Tourism Entrepreneur Award - Ryan Sanders, Haka Tours, Canterbury
Outstanding Contribution to Tourism Award - Jeanette Richardson, Waitangi National Trust, Northland.

WHY THEY WON:

Wally Stone

WALLY Stone is a founding member and chairman of Whale Watch Kaikoura. He reflects the essence of the industry. His service to it spans from tourism operator to regional tourism to national and international tourism. He was a TNZ board member for nine years - chairman for six of those - during the conception and ensuing success of the *100%Pure* campaign.

Sustainability

In all his work, Mr Stone has always strongly valued the importance of social, economic and environmental sustainability. He has faced and overcome many challenges - no more so than 20 years ago when he gained widespread community support for the development of Whale Watch Kaikoura - today one of New Zealand's most awarded companies and a tourism operator that epitomises kaitiakitanga.

Mr Stone remains at the helm of this successful Maori business, an inspirational venture that has put Kaikoura on the visitor map.

Ryan Sanders

Four years ago **Ryan Sanders** left his corporate job in the UK to return to New Zealand to work in the tourism industry. He says it was the best decision he's ever made, one that has made his working life a pleasure. This entrepreneurial young Kiwi is the owner and director of Haka Tours which offers visitors guided adventure and snow tours.

Remotely

Mr Sanders ran the business remotely from the UK for the first 16 months as he perfected the business model, returning to New Zealand when he knew he had a viable business on his hands. The 32-year-old's latest initiative is the purchase of Haka Lodge, a new boutique flash-backpackers in Christchurch.

Innovation is at the heart of Ryan's business philosophy. He is striving to run and grow a great business and to think outside the square, identifying and grasping opportunities to further differentiate Haka Tours.

Jeanette Richardson

Jeanette Richardson, as CEO of the Waitangi National Trust for the past eight years, has spearheaded improvements at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds, a major tourism project that has significant cultural meaning for the nation.

Ms Richardson has worked closely with iwi and other organisations, enhancing the celebration of New Zealand's national day and related festival.

Overseer

She has overseen the development of infrastructure that has transformed the iconic site into a world-class facility.

An inspirational leader, she has brought about a positive change in the way Treaty Ground staff operate. Under

her watch, attendees to the Waitangi celebrations have quadrupled. Her contribution and commitment has benefited the Northland economy, with the trust a significant employer of local people.



Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World

IN 2009 as many of New Zealand's international visitor markets went into a tail spin, **Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World** went into action. The Auckland attraction breathed new life into this well-established venture through a smart and responsive marketing programme it called *Oceans of Things to Sea and Do*.

Domestic

The winning campaign targeted the domestic market in particular, giving New Zealanders repeated reasons to keep returning. Six promotions were run throughout the year. They included *Megalodon - the Monster Shark*, which cleverly combined kids' love of the scary and ever-popular sharks, and *25 Years Under the Sea*, a celebration of Kelly Tarlton's 25th anniversary. Kiwis who thought they had 'done' Kelly Tarlton's realised they had plenty of reasons for visiting again - boosting visitor numbers and profits.

Stray - Adventure Tours

MUCH more than just a transport company, **Stray - Adventure Tours** competes on quality. It offers strong and relevant points of difference to generate positive word of mouth, with the company's Stray Mates referral system rewarding past customers for booking referrals.

Activities

Stray promises to take travellers "further off the beaten track" and staff actively hunt out local activities and overnight stops with a difference - sleeping on a marae and in an old West Coast gold miners' pub. Experiences such as its overnight at the Blue Duck Lodge wilderness area are amongst its top rating features and are exclusive to Stray.

Over the past two years Stray has almost doubled the size of its business and hugely improved profitability - all during a global downturn and in a market which is price sensitive.

The International Travel College of New Zealand

INNOVATING for success is a fitting theme for **The International Travel College of New Zealand (ITC)** a premium supplier of training programmes for the airline, travel and tourism industry for more than 14 years.

Certificate

In the past two years, ITC has launched a Certificate in Aviation, introduced an online check in system as part of its training and opened its new airport training centre - an innovative facility that looks like an airport, feels like an aircraft, but works like three training rooms, providing an inspiring learning environment. ITC recently launched its Study Awards, offering a scholarship fund of more than \$22,000 for more than 30 students. As well as training at the college, ITC has built great connections with the industry, enabling it to provide students with onsite work experience.

Explore NZ

A progressive, dynamic and sustainable company, **Explore NZ** offers a range of tours, cruises and island activities in the Bay of Islands and Auckland.

The judges say energy radiates throughout the company, an industry leader that is willing to share its knowledge and experience with others.

This is a company with a genuine commitment to the environment. Numerous innovations have been initiated to support this focus, including the fleet-wide introduction of bio-fuel, a first in New Zealand, and its partnership in the Bay of Islands ecological restoration programme, *Project Island Song*.

Rhythm and Vines Festival

INNOVATE or die was the impetus behind organisers reshaping **Rhythm and Vines Festival** from a 24-hour event to a three-day format in 2008. They wanted to ensure this New Year's Eve music festival didn't become just a memory but an enduring event. And it worked.

Now in its eighth year, Rhythm and Vines has grown from a one-day festival for 1,500 friends and "friends of friends", into a three-day extravaganza with a multi-million dollar production budget and featuring major international acts.

Contribution

With 20,000 attendees, 2,000 staff and volunteers and 60 international and local acts, the festival contributes millions of dollars into the Gisborne economy each year.

Working together with local community, tourism and local government organisations, Rhythm and Vines has evolved into a must-visit festival, ranked by international media as one of "the" places to be on New Year's Eve.



Kennedy Park

WHEN it opened for business in 1937, **Kennedy Park** offered travellers the option of a campsite, hut or caravan site. Over the ensuing 73 years this popular Napier holiday park has been transformed.

Choice

Today guests can choose from motel units and eco-friendly modern cabins with ensuites to traditional cabins and tent sites.

Innovation is at the heart of Kennedy Park's operations, a business that aims to deliver its customers a complete holiday experience. One of the projects staff are proud of is the park's growing relationship with a New Caledonian mining company. Every year the mine operators pay for a group of employees' children to holiday at the park, with numbers growing each time.

Te Kahui Tupua

TOURISM brand **Te Kahui Tupua** is a five year collaboration of 11 iwi, three local authorities, three District/RTOs, the Whanganui Maori RTO and more than 100 tourism operators, working together with funding from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise.

Ruapehu District Council leads the initiative, created in response to dire economic and social indicators that saw these districts fail to reach their potential and under achieve compared with other local economies.

Platform

Te Kahui Tupua has helped grow the region's small, independent tourism sector into a coordinated group of well-trained operators, able to compete successfully for a slice of the visitor dollar.

It has provided a platform for bringing iwi into the regional economy, growing employment opportunity for local Maori.

The judges say everyone involved in this initiative is passionate about it. Te Kahui Tupua is an example of what a strong partnership between local government and the tourism industry can achieve.

Bolton Hotel

WELLINGTON'S **Bolton Hotel** is an independent, luxury boutique property, which always tries to think differently about what it can offer visitors, challenging the status quo and giving them a compelling reason to choose it. The judges commend the Bolton's commitment to originality, independence of thought and industry leadership. One of the hotel's latest innovations is its "Brainfood" functions menu - attractive and tasty food designed to stimulate the neural pathways of event attendees, keeping them mentally alert throughout the day.

Finalist

The hotel's restaurant was a finalist in this year's *Cuisine Magazine's* Restaurant of the Year competition. Executive chef Steve Morris is now sharing his expertise through a series of online cooking tutorials allowing gourmet enthusiasts the chance to learn classical techniques at home.

YHA Wellington

ENVIRONMENTAL sustainability is core to **YHA Wellington**, a business that has a complete commitment to doing its bit for the New Zealand environment.

The first backpackers in New Zealand to achieve Qualmark's Enviro-Gold standard, this innovative and distinctive property has over 250 sustainable features. These range from converting wastewater from showers into electricity to 'switch off' ticks on all the light switches and recycling of clothing and batteries.

Sustainable

Attracting guests from around New Zealand and the world, the hostel's aim is to be sustainable itself, and to educate guests on how they can be sustainable as they travel. Staff turnover is low because staff love working at the YHA Wellington and guests love staying in a hostel that walks the green talk. The judges said YHA Wellington doesn't stop improving. Innovation is the core of the business backed up with great results.

Lochmara Lodge

CONSERVATION, art and luxury have proved a winning combination for **Lochmara Lodge**, Marlborough Sounds. Owners Louise and Shayne Olsen have created a special place where visitors relax and enjoy themselves.

They can also learn about the environment and be gently encouraged to treat it with sensitivity and respect. Lochmara was the first private conservation area open to the public in the Sounds, and works closely with DoC and local iwi on conservation projects. The couple and their staff have created a wildlife recovery and arts centre - a tourism attraction that combines art and wildlife for mutual benefit.

Wilsons' Abel Tasman National Park

STARTING with a single passenger launch service in 1977, **Wilsons' Abel Tasman National Park** now offers visitors a selection of experiences - from two hours to five days, encompassing cruise, water taxi, walking and sea kayaking options. Overnight trips are hosted at Beachfront Lodges, built by the family on their historic

freehold land in the Abel Tasman. The family's ancestors have been welcoming visitors since 1841. Today's generation and staff are committed to the values of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga.

The company has upgraded its boat design to attract higher yield independent and group visitors. And it has introduced new and innovative itineraries, increasing the range of day trip options to include other regional highlights like cycling, arts and crafts and wine tasting.



Anchorage Motel

OWNER operators Fiona and Nigel Humphries have been on a journey of reinvestment ever since they bought into **Anchorage Motel** in Te Anau 10 years ago. Sustainability is a priority for this winning couple. They are proud of their Qualmark Gold Enviro-Award, and were recently recognised for their environmental performance in the Southland environmental awards. One of their new initiatives is retro bikes, encouraging guests to "slow right down and enjoy Te Anau". The bikes are available to guests in return for a donation to the Pomona Island Charitable Trust.

Having great innovations and good business practices in place has helped them ride out the recession. Profitability is still strong and the level of repeat clientele speaks volumes for the guest experience.

ADVERT



Tourism Leadership for the Rotorua Region

We seek to appoint an independent Chairperson to chair the newly created Tourism Committee. The Committee is being formed as a result of restructuring and replaces the former Rotorua Tourism Board.

The Chairperson will require:

- ⊙ Previous experience at the board table
- ⊙ Leadership experience and competence
- ⊙ Strategic, analytical, operational, and communication competencies
- ⊙ A passion for Rotorua
- ⊙ A comprehensive understanding of marketing techniques and practices particularly as they relate to regional tourism organisations and the tourism industry.

For more information see www.rotoruaNZ.com/committee. This site provides information about Destination Rotorua Tourism Marketing, a recent review of visitor industry representations arrangements, requirements of the Chair and members, committee Terms of Reference, etc.

Suitable applicants are invited to submit a CV and other relevant material to Peter Guerin, Chief Executive, Rotorua District Council, Private Bag 3029, Rotorua Mail Centre, Rotorua or email peter.guerin@rdc.govt.nz marked "**Tourism Leadership, Private and Confidential by 27 October 2010**" for consideration by the appointment panel.