

## Awards reveal business secrets

**More than 300 people packed into the Novotel to celebrate the Manawatu Business Awards last night and of all the dozens of speeches made, video clips shown and thousands of words uttered, it was a few hard-hitting comments that put the whole night into perspective, writes Ewan Sargent in an editorial in the Manawatu Standard.**

They came from James Lockhart - Vision Manawatu chairman, head of the Massey Graduate School of Business and head of the awards judging panel.

The night had been full of congratulations, but he posted a general warning: Widespread business success wouldn't come by chance.

Palmerston North needed to have First World infrastructure put in place by a city council that understood the importance of this to businesses, he said.

He also said if New Zealanders celebrated business success with the same energy they celebrated sports and other lifestyle pursuits, our standard of living would go through the roof.

But if his rallying call pointed out there was much that still could be done to lift the region's economic success, the evening revealed plenty of pockets of outstanding achievement, and that included the finalists as well as winners.

Very different types of award categories were used this year and they produced a pleasingly eclectic crop of beaming smiles on the stage.

Congratulations to the winners - The Brewer's Apprentice, Inspire Net, Arohanui Hospice, Pridex Kitchens, Elements Natural Therapy, Blacksheepdesign - and doubly so to the supreme winner Pridex.

And, diverse as the bunch was, there were some obvious similarities among the winners.

All the businesses clearly made a huge effort to do whatever they did as well as they could. There were no cheap and nasty cowboy outfits. Quality mattered and that's how they won and kept clients.

Pridex's Steve Channing-Pearce summed it up well when he said the company pursued excellence - not being average, or good, or even very good. Just excellent. One other observation. All the winners praised their staff effusively - from lifetime award winners the Higgins Group with their 900 employees nationwide, to natural therapy operator Paula Harris with her sole employee partner. Good staff made the difference and the businesses knew it and appreciated them for it.

**One more thing:** It's understandable that there should be a few misgivings over the way the planned lake project at Aokautere has shrunk. Now the city is being asked to back a 25ha lake instead of a 37ha lake. Size does matter, because that influences what uses the lake can be put to and how well it can lure people here to Palmerston North for water events. If the drop in size means some sports can't operate at certain levels, that's important. The lake has to be more than a water feature for new housing developments.

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