



THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR THE CITY

Spike@School
Case Study
March 2009
Interview with Brendon Muir

Recession a Great Time to Innovate

The economic downturn is really starting to hit New Zealand, including the Waikato region. That's why, on 23 March, Opportunity Hamilton is teaming up with the Ministry of Social Development to bring 200 local business leaders together for a regional Job Summit.

The purpose of the Job Summit is to come up with major initiatives we can implement straight away to maintain and grow jobs in the Waikato region.

We've already started to see some great ideas being sent to Opportunity Hamilton by the local business leaders who will attend the Summit. The challenge will be to implement these ideas as quickly as possible for the greatest economic benefit.

However, depending on the actions taken, it's likely the benefits could take a year or more to flow through to the economy.

So, what can you do now to insulate your business from the economic downturn?

For some businesses, 'innovation' just might be the key, and I wanted to share two ideas with you that could work for your business.

Collaborate to Compete

One way of innovating is collaborating to compete, or 'clustering,' with other similar businesses in your field. Often, working together with like businesses – even your competition – can help you grow your business by gaining major contracts, entering new markets together or taking advantage of joint opportunities that you couldn't have done on your own.

A former Opportunity Hamilton client who has recently collaborated with other businesses to win a major contract is Brendon Muir, owner of Spike@School.

Spike@School is a unique software programme that makes it incredibly easy for teachers and school administrators to create and maintain a primary school website. The software also allows teachers to use their school websites as interactive learning tools through the use of Spike@School's 'Learning Caves.'

Spike@School's Learning Caves are an online group collaboration area for primary school students. They are a unique Learning Management System where students are encouraged to work together toward a common goal using a special Enquiry Learning model.

Spike@School recently went together with two other software companies – Dataview and Catalyst – to bid for a major Ministry of Education contract. They won the contract and were named the Preferred Developer for the Ministry's Managed Learning Environment project.

Brendan's software is currently in 75 primary schools around the country and winning this joint contract will help him reach his goal of getting his software into 300 schools over the next few years.

Break into New Markets

If collaborating with your competition isn't an option for you, perhaps entering a new geographic market could work?

Again, Brendon Muir with Spike@School is a good example of how exploring new markets could work for you. He is exploring entering the Canadian market.

This month, a group of 20 schools in the Saskatchewan province are considering the Spike@School programme for rollout to primary students. If the decision moves forward, the contract will open up a whole new geographic market for Brendon's business and could be an entry point into all of North America.