

Changing Perspectives – Address by Heidi Ward-McGrath (10.8.2006)

Entrepreneur of the Year

“Leaders are visionaries; they step up, give back, speak up and front up. They challenge assumptions and galvanise change. I would like to ask you if you are a driver of change?”

Attended an all girl’s school in Oamaru. Grew up in an environment which wanted all-rounder’s who give back to the community.

“I like to take the road less travelled as you can go further down that road”.

She dreamt of becoming a flying vet as loved planes and animals. Attended Massey University. The reality of Massey was that few people who attended would pass and become qualified.

“Don’t tell people your weaknesses as they probably won’t work it out by themselves”. “Get to know your enemies and keep them close”. Work them to your advantage.

“Turn threats into opportunities”. Threats can provide results.

“Hard work is about 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration”.

A motorbike accident left Heidi on crutches. Showed up at Massey in a pair of very short shorts and suddenly everyone assisted her. Professor wrote to hospital in order to get her the proper care.

“Success in life is relative”. Although she got lower marks in university she still became ‘doctor’.

Went to Masterton for her first job and found out what was expected in the industry. Became redundant and local people started visiting her home to get vet services for their cats and dogs. Now she owns the biggest vet practice in the region – it was an award winning business by the time she was 30. At first she didn’t know why people came to her when there were five alternative vet practices in the region and other practices put the pressure on her not to compete with them – she was bullied and it got nasty.

Running a business is about listening to people, interpreting what they say, asking people what they want, providing people with what they want and charging people for what they want.

If there is a problem with your business – bite the bullet and go ask your clients what they want. Business is all about customer service. Businesses must evolve to suit the economy and customers. Always useful to ask clients “am I doing this right?” It takes guts to make change.

“If you hit a wall go round it, under it, over it or through it”.

“If you’re being bullied in business deal with it – toughen up – don’t wallow – get on with it”.

“You have the ability to do what you need to do”.

Have fun in business – “The day I stop having fun in business is the day I’ll stop doing that business”.