



We ♥ Business

by [Sarah Trotman](#)

The sky is not falling on our heads; it's certainly challenging out there but staying positive will make a huge difference in this difficult economic climate. Whether you're a large or small business, there is a lot to be said for holding your head up high, standing tall and focusing on your business. We've commissioned 'We ♥ business' billboards around Auckland because I believe there has never been a more important time to take a stand.

If big businesses want to play their part in getting the engine rolling again, it makes sense for them to support their smaller business counterparts. Give them an opportunity to tender for your business, focus on delivering products and services that enable them to work more productively and make time in your diary to share your knowledge by mentoring these businesses.

It is the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are the lifeblood of our economy, and they have big intentions.

Passion is a word that encapsulates what small business is all about. The owner, staff and suppliers all have their finger on the pulse of the business. They are committed, engaged, customer focused and responsive to what the business needs because they are all living every aspect of the business on the front line. In these changing times they also have the advantage of being able to reinvent themselves more quickly than big businesses – a huge benefit.

SMEs comprise 97 percent of all New Zealand businesses and most employ 19 people or less. Those enterprises account for nearly 39 percent of New Zealand's value-added output and employ 30 percent of all employees. They are diverse, innovative and exciting, and cover one end of New Zealand to the other.

We cannot afford to ignore the sheer volume of smaller businesses, and as the

business landscape changes, we will see smaller businesses grow in number and power to provide more and more of New Zealand's wealth. These smaller companies need world-class support – from government to business services, from sustainability support to innovation, from design to IT – if they are to continue to make the many positive contributions to the economy.

Prime Minister John Key sees the significant opportunity for business in supporting SMEs. In his words: "They provide Kiwis with the essential goods and services they need. They help drive innovation across our economy. And they can become – with good leadership and support – our large businesses of tomorrow."

I am delighted Key is presenting this year's Vero Excellence in Business Support Awards at a gala dinner during the Bizzzone Business Expo.

Whether large or small, the organisations providing great business support are succeeding because they are committed to achieving results for their business customers. A record number entered this year's awards with all finalists being outstanding in their fields.

Business is tougher for everyone this year so it is even more important to keep the standards high and focus on delivering excellence for your customers. In my 25 years in business there have always been issues facing business owners – whether it's interest rates, the dollar, cash flow, or infrastructure. It is vital that business owners focus on what they can control, and continue to move their businesses forward by innovating.

When faced with challenges, business owners can feel isolated. By providing solutions, big businesses can help make the owner's next leap of faith a little less daunting. The courage required to run a business often comes with support from businesses which know what you are go-

ing through. A great example of this is the National Bank's online Business Resource Centre (www.nationalbank.co.nz/brc).

The National Bank and Bizzzone got together this year to brainstorm the additional support we could provide businesses. We realised that a year ago we would have easily predicted the key challenges facing business, but the business landscape has changed in 2009 and if we were both to offer practical, relevant solutions then we would need to ask this question right now to get a true picture.

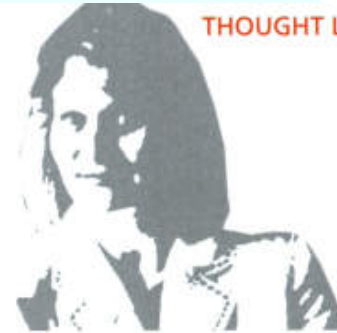
Bizzzone and the National Bank surveyed 44,000 business owners asking: "What is your biggest business issue?" Merged results show the two major issues are cashflow and sales/marketing. The speakers in the National Bank Seminar Series at the Bizzzone Business Expo will address these key challenges, and special zones have been established to focus on developing business owners' skills in these areas.

The Bizzzone Business Expo has grown to become the country's largest event for business. More than 13,000 business owners attend – not just because it's a great place to network and learn but because of the excellent support services on offer. **M**

[Sarah Trotman](#) is managing director of Bizzzone, a business support company focused on small and medium businesses. She also runs the Bizzzone Business Expo, the Vero Excellence in Business Support Awards and publishes a business magazine.

Dates for the 2009 Bizzzone Business Expos are:

- Auckland, 27-29 May, ASB Showgrounds
 - Wellington, 22-24 July, TSB Bank Arena
 - Christchurch, 5-7 August, Christchurch Convention Centre
- www.bizzzone.com



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