



Express Data sole disty at rebranded expo

FORTY TECHNOLOGY-RELATED companies are among approximately 175 organisations signed up to exhibit at “business to business marketplace” the Auckland Bizzone Business Expo. It will also take place in Wellington and Christchurch over the next few months, with Auckland having led the way from 27 to 29 May.

Among the exhibitors are numerous business software companies and vendors, but of the major IT distributors only Express Data has registered. Sarah Trotman, managing director of Bizzone, has a message for major IT distributors that don't have a Bizzone presence: “They're absolutely missing out not being there.”

It's the first year the expo is branded the Bizzone Business Expo rather than the Small Business Expo. “It's a general business expo now,” says Trotman, “rather than having a focus on small businesses.”

Trotman is now franchising the Bizzone concept into Australia, and will be hosting around 15 guests from Australia at the Auckland expo; accountants, lawyers and others who might be interested in a Bizzone franchise.

The expo is becoming increasingly popular as a launch pad for tech startups, she says.
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Rn READER VALUE:

- The Small Business Expo has rebranded itself the Bizzone Business Expo
- Only one of the major IT distributors is exhibiting at the expo
- Three tech startups will use this year's expo as their launch pad

“Over the past 12 months we've met with three companies that are launching at the expo, so it's a wonderful environment for IT companies in particular.”

Paul Plester, general manager of sales and marketing at Express Data — exhibiting for the first time — says the company sees Bizzone as a way of raising awareness around the hardware and software productivity tools of one of its most important vendors. “Our focus is largely around Sun Microsystems,” says Plester. “Some of the technologies they've got at the moment are particularly well suited to small businesses and education.”

However, Simon Scott, director of Acquire, says he's surprised a distributor would see any value in the expo. “It's not a place for distributors because they don't supply directly to businesses. A place for a distributor to be would be an expo for resellers.”

As an e-commerce website, Acquire doesn't dovetail neatly with the other exhibitors either, but Scott says that as well as having a large retail customer base, Acquire deals with businesses, offering tiered pricing. “Obviously we are a website, but to our business customers we describe ourselves as a procurement agent.”

Acquire aims to proactively engage attendees with various forms of entertainment designed to minimise what he calls “walk by traffic”. This year, Scott has something new in mind. “I thought we'd have a dartboard and invite people to enter a draw and throw a dart to win a prize.” His idea might not sit well with the Accident Compensation Corporation, which has a stand in Hall 2.

“I haven't actually asked anyone at Bizzone,” he says, “but with a stand nine metres long I think we have enough room to throw darts safely.” **Chris Bell**