



Smaller businesses join rugby pack

by Kelly Gregor

With 463 days to go until the Rugby World Cup kicks off scores of smaller businesses have joined the pack seeking to cash in on the expected surge in spending.

The Auckland City Council and other regional economic development agencies have launched "The Pitch" campaign, which has been established to help promote small- to medium-sized businesses reach their potential before the cup begins.

The campaign closed last Friday and 77 businesses have signed on to receive mentoring and advice from industry leaders on how they can capitalise on the cup.

The first mentoring sessions began yesterday in Auckland at the opening of Bizzone's business expo.

Claire Morris, an Auckland City Council project co-ordinator, said the campaign gave businesses greater contacts and exposure to leaders in the business community through organisations such as Tourism New Zealand.

Morris said the campaign was all about making the most of the cup, and making sure

businesses were on track with advertising, marketing and planning.

Morris said the aim of the mentoring workshops was to arrange an introductory meeting between the business owners with influential people in the business community.

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Claire Morris
Auckland City Council project co-ordinator

"It's a cross between *Dragons' Den* and speed dating. It is like a date. What happens next is up to you. We set it [the meeting] up," she said.

"Businesses need to ask themselves what their target market is. Ask themselves

whether they are ready for the RWC. Who is going to end up visiting here and how you can match that up. The spotlight is going to be on New Zealand and Auckland wants to make the most of that."

Businesses that have signed up include La Lumiere, Storybox, De Beer Tours, Canine Spirit, Taniwha Toys'n Tales, Stonepaper Company and KiwiShaver.

The campaign was one of 187 exhibitors at the ASB Showgrounds yesterday. The event runs until tomorrow.

Bizzzone founder Sarah Trotman said the expo, now in its sixth year, was the biggest in the country.

Trotman said she wanted visitors to take at least three to four ideas from the expo on how to make their businesses more effective.

She said 53 per cent of visitors conducted business with the exhibitors during the expo by either switching banks, or taking on mentoring or marketing services, and 68 per cent of visitors do business with the exhibitors in the three months after the event. Exhibitors include Air NZ, National Bank, Westpac, MYOB, KiwiBank, JuiceTV and ASB.



GLITTERING PRIZE: Claire Morris says the campaign is all about businesses making the most of the RWC.

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