



Sarah Trotman is the founder and managing director of Bizzone, New Zealand's largest business to business marketplace. She fields 10 questions in 10 minutes, and her time starts now:

NZB: *You're in touch with over 10,000 business owners through the Bizzone Business Expos in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch – what is the 'grass roots' feedback you're getting on the business sector right now? Are we really over last year's 'Great Recession', or has the recovery been largely exaggerated?*

ST: The recession has left significant scars on many SMEs and recovery will be slow. The biggest impact I hear about is that

many businesses would have been better off financially if they'd laid excess staff off during the recession. But they chose to keep them on due to the negative impact on the all-important team culture that a reduction in staff numbers would have created.

NZB: *What gives you the most satisfaction about staging the Bizzone Business Expos?*

ST: I think I speak for the whole Bizzone



team when I say it's watching the load lifting off the business owners' shoulders as they wander around the Expo and realise they are not the only business owner feeling the challenges of the complex task of running a business. I love watching a packed audience hanging off the every word of an expert speaker at The National Bank Seminar Series.

NZB: What has been the stand-out highlight of your own business career so far? And what made that experience so special?

ST: No doubt receiving a leadership award from the Sir Peter Blake Trust – pretty gutsy of them to give it to a risk taking entrepreneur! What was most special about the award though was that someone (Claire Fouhy) noticed the work I was doing and took the time to nominate me.

NZB: What are the values that drive Bizzzone as a business?

ST: There are four: Courageous Vision, Collaborate Enthusiastically, Be Great and Make a Difference.

NZB: What has been your toughest challenge in running your business?

ST: For me it's the isolation. There are obvious benefits to having 100 percent equity in a business but the journey can be

a lonely one. I'm so fortunate to have an amazing team of inspirational people around me.

NZB: What is your focus now with Bizzzone? Where to from here?

ST: There're two big projects ahead of us. Now that we have proven our total business support model here in New Zealand we are franchising it into Australia and then, once proven there, the world. Also, business owners don't just have

issues on the days we decide to run the business expos, they've got them 365 days of the year so we've developed Bizzzone Online, which is a directory of the best products and services available to business.

NZB: Briefly, what's your advice for exhibitors in regard to maximising their marketing spend at the expo?

ST: Get quality, dynamic staff on your expo stand and be clear about your expo objectives. Think carefully about what your first interaction will be with attendees as they walk up to your stand.

NZB: And what's your advice to visitors for them to get the most from attending?

ST: Spend at least a day at the expo; it'll force you to take that all-important helicopter view of your business. Make the most of what's on offer – take up the free mentoring, get a dose of inspiration in the "Stuff Up" Room from business leaders who have been so willing to talk about their business mistakes, and take in some of the 40 free expert speakers at The National Bank Seminar Series.

NZB: Who has inspired you the most during your business career? Where do you draw your inspiration from?

ST: I'm inspired by anyone who has achieved the combination of personal and business success and anyone who has achieved their greatest potential. The late Sir James Fletcher and Sir Ron Carter are two great examples. My inspiration comes from those around me who believe in my ambitious vision, for both myself and my business, and my ability to execute on it.

NZB: What is the best piece of business advice you ever received?

ST: NEVER GIVE UP!