



# Study inspires students to create ecoPortal

BY ULRIKA HEDQUIST

A research project focusing on implementing environmental management systems has inspired three mechanical engineering students to start their own business.

University of Auckland PhD students Logan Wait, Manuel Seidel and Richard Cross took the plunge into entrepreneurship when they launched ecoPortal at the recent Bizzone Business Expo in Auckland. EcoPortal is a web-based environmental management system that aims to help companies become more sustainable and ultimately reach the international standard of environmental management, ISO 14001, says Logan Wait.

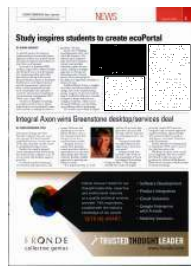
"It aims to simplify everything a company needs to know about improving its environmental credentials and sets a roadmap for how to

get there," he says.

At the core is helping local businesses drive cost out of the business. The software gives organisations the tools to measure current costs and put solutions in place to save money. Taking a strategic approach to sorting out increasing costs of waste, power, travel and transport can help save significant amounts of money, he says.

Auckland-based Autex, a supplier of textiles and advanced fibre technology, has cut its manufacturing energy usage by 35 percent with the help of ecoPortal, Wait says. Another example is design and furniture company Criterion, which is now saving \$75,000 per year by being more efficient with its packaging.

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standard for environmental management, ISO 14001, can be difficult to achieve, says Wait. It requires quite a lot of expertise to set up an environmental management system with which an organisation can secure ISO accreditation.

All of the required expertise has been built into ecoPortal and works within existing business processes and workflows, he says. EcoPortal provides a simple step-by-step approach to keep improving and eventually reach the ISO standard, he says.

The online system also encourages team-work, he says. It provides for documentation control and com-

pliance, but is focused on people and giving them recognition for what they do, says Wait.

Being ISO-compliant is also good for business, according to Wait. Increasingly, consumers, retailers, manufacturers and governments worldwide are favouring products and services from environmentally responsible companies, he says. The software was developed in-house.

The trio behind the ecoPortal company, which was recently admitted into the Accelerator Programme at Auckland-based business incubator The Icehouse, are now combining their studies with running the business.

