



Press, The
06/08/2009
Page: 4
By: Tina Law
Section: Business News
Region: Christchurch Circulation: 92465
Type: Metro
Size: 636.00 sq.cms
Frequency: MTWTF--

Ingenuity 'will improve productivity'

Tina Law

New Zealand needs to use its ingenuity to improve the productivity of its manufacturers, says clothing maker Davey Hughes.

The founder of Swazi Apparel, an outdoor clothing designer and manufacturer, said when he first measured the productivity of his Levin factory he thought it was terrible.

"I thought I'm going to go broke," he said at the Bizzone Business Expo in Christchurch yesterday.

But other manufacturers told him his measures were pretty good. "It had nothing to do with people working harder, but working smarter."

Hughes invested in technology to improve

productivity and made small changes, which included getting garments across the factory faster.

New Zealand has a productivity level the same as Portugal, where they took a siesta in the middle of the day, Hughes said.

"We work hard, we work long hours. What is it about the way we work?"

"We are bloody Kiwis, we know how to bend No 8 wire, but we need to push buttons as well."

Financially, the best advice he was ever given was to stay focused on margins.

"If we could go back 15 years and revisit some things [I'd] focus on margin."

Companies needed to make sure they made enough profit so they could turn their businesses

into something with a future, Hughes said.

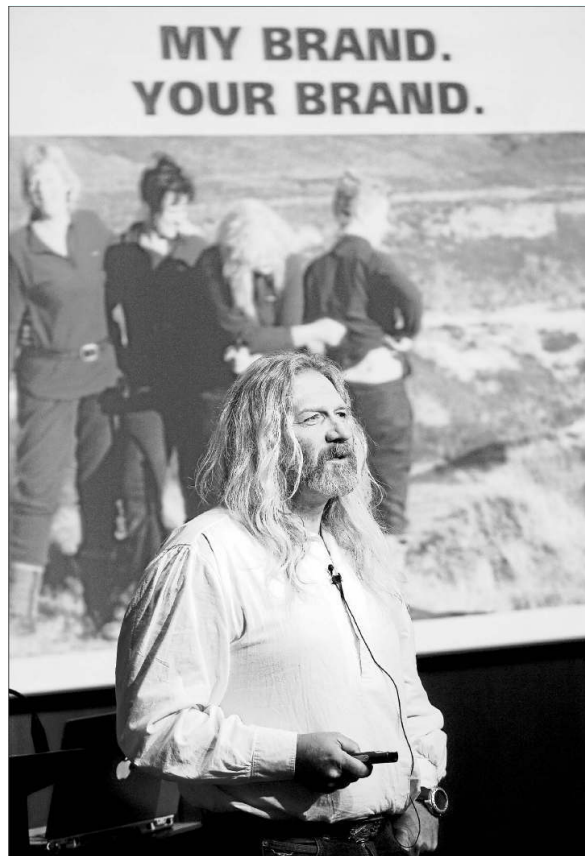
Another aspect he would focus more on was protecting intellectual property.

"I was so naive. I'd spent most of my life in the bush."

Swazi manufactures its range of hardy outdoor clothing in Levin and was one of few New Zealand companies still making clothing onshore.

Hughes said he had nothing against the companies who had gone to Asia to make their products, but he wanted to manufacture in New Zealand because it was part of Swazi's brand.

He placed a lot of importance on the brand, saying businesses needed to realise it was the customer who owned the brand, not the company.



Marketing advice: Swazi Apparel founder Davey Hughes talks at the Bizzone Business Expo in Christchurch yesterday.

Photo: DEAN KOZANIC