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**Regional Development in Marlborough, New Zealand.  
Experiences and Lessons from a Regional Development Practitioner.**

Economic development – what is it? There are dozens of descriptions and I think it changes over time. At the moment – to me ED is transformational – it is trying to adapt to changes in short time periods to the way the world works and the future the next two or three generations will inherit.

I want to address three topics this afternoon:

- Regional development in NZ and how we have gone about it in Marlborough and what drove us down that line
- The Marlborough brand – how it came about and what risks it faces
- Identifying and leveraging competitive advantage

I'll do that by providing a little context in the form of history, touch on our planning philosophy, canvas our approach to consensus, leadership, and working with stakeholders, and illustrate that with a case study of the Marlborough wine research centre.

**Recent history**

First we need to look at Economic Development in New Zealand because it's very different to what you have here.

From 1984 to 1999, New Zealand was the only OECD country without an economic development policy. We had concluded that all we had to do was create a market led economy unstained by any intervention and all would be well. It took us a decade and a half to draw a different conclusion.

The election of a new Labour government in 1999 espousing “third way” economic principles led to the adoption of the OECD LEED model and the creation as its principle tool, the Regional Partnerships Programme (RPP).

Even now there is far from universal agreement that intervention can make a difference, at national level let alone for a small region. The idea that we should grapple with a vastly complex system, and attempt

interventions to create planned outcomes is conceptually difficult and there is a continuing tension between those of us who believe that the market needs a little sympathetic gardening and those that believe it should be left entirely feral.

The MRDT was formed in 2000 to address what appeared to be a fundamental market failure. Marlborough was experiencing increasing labour and skill shortages and one would have expected that to put upward pressure on wage rates. However, there was no indication of that occurring and we continued a long-term history of the lowest hourly wage rates in NZ. We recognised the labour shortages as the leading edge of a much bigger trend, rather than some short-term local event, something that took us another two years to convince government of. What we recognised was that while Marlborough was achieving upper decile growth, a disproportionate number of the higher value jobs in the production chain were in other regions and for some reason that we have still not isolated, we paid considerably less for equivalent work than other regions. We were in effect the blue colour workers and the white-collar workers were somewhere else. At the same time, our cost of living was climbing towards the top of the ladder and we are now the second least affordable place to live in New Zealand. That has major social and economic implications and we had to find a way of returning some at least of the higher paid jobs to the region.

With demographic trends meaning a decreasing proportion of the population of working age, a focus on yield and productivity was considered essential and influenced by your own Peter Kenyon's work we concluded that it was at least worth trying to arrest the troubling loss of youth from our region. Out of a total population of 42,000 we lost 2,000 15 to 24 year olds in the 5 years between the last two censuses.

Our aim quite simply is to increase the productivity of everything that we do across the region – in the economy, socially, environmentally and culturally.

And most importantly we chose deliberately to be different – in fact, given our particular circumstances, we believed that we had to be different.

“If you want to succeed you should strike out on new paths rather than travel the worn paths of accepted success”

John D Rockefeller Snr

In other words – do different things differently. There's a strong compelling logic to that when you think about it. You don't win at sport with the same game plan as the opposition and you certainly don't win at business by adopting the same business model and strategy as your competition. So we should not expect to win at ED by using the same business model as everyone else.

We concluded that we needed to try to understand as much of the system called Marlborough as we could, because pretty much everything is connected to everything else, and that small changes in one place could have large and unexpected impacts elsewhere in the system or conversely, large interventions have little or no impact because some other effect is having a buffering effect.

We saw and continue to see our role as one of transformation. Transformation isn't about making the old things happen faster – goodness knows that's happening anyway. Economic transformation is about, in our view “culture change”. It is about changing the way people think and behave about the ways that we manage the economy and community and interact with the environment. And that does not exactly court popularity.

“It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful to success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things”

Machiavelli.

And that brought with it another set of tensions. ED in New Zealand operates within a very loose framework – in fact it's probably an overstatement to claim that any framework exists at all – although there are major changes to be announced later this month. For beginners, central government does not fund EDAs

– it funds regional development projects and is at pains to ensure that none of that funding rests with the EDAs. None the less it identifies EDAs as an essential part of the Economic Transformation Agenda. Project funding must comply with national policy and goals although enquiry reveals that despite appearing in the instruction manuals, there aren't any. EDAs vary in form from independent community trusts to departments of local councils. They range in size from 0.5 FTE to large corporations, from less than \$100,000pa to over \$8 million pa budgets.

At the local level they integrate with a relatively new framework called the Long Term Council Community Plan. These plans are intended to represent the community's 25 year aspirations and co-ordinate not only council, but also a whole range of government agencies as well. This process is in its infancy. In our particular case the *Progress Marlborough* strategy preceded the LTCCP and because it was based on a very extensive community consultation process was able to act as one of the LTCCP's two founding documents. As a consequence the goals of each are closely aligned. That is not universal.

By pure serendipity we have an almost perfect hierarchy of mission statements.

- “Promoting social, cultural, environmental and economic well being”  
Local Government Act (2002)
- “Enabling social and economic development in balance with environmental and community needs”  
MDC Mission Statement
- “Enriching the quality of life for all the people of Marlborough, present and future, through improved economic, social, environmental and cultural performance”  
MRDT Mission

The Marlborough strategy considers that economy, environment and community are so interlinked that it attempts to avoid differentiating between the three factors.

Being different means that we have to be prepared to challenge and sometimes break the “rules”. Not because we have a reckless disregard for rules and convention, but because the rate of change in the world today is increasing exponentially and as EDAs we have to be able to run at least as fast – otherwise we are followers and not leaders – and being leaders is in my opinion, one of the most important functions of ED. We have to literally be able to respond to circumstances and opportunities in real time. In other words, we not only need new rules but we should expect those rules to be changing almost in real time.

Being able to act and react fast enough is one of the greatest challenges I see EDAs facing. We have to be able to adopt an emergent strategy approach and that can be at odds with funding mechanisms and bring on criticism from the proponents of more traditional planning approaches who say emergent strategy is just a flash word for “making it up on the fly”. I call it changing the game plan as the game plays out – and it is an essential part of our approach to strategy.

The MRDT was founded on an extensive four year community consultation process – it took that long to convince Council that it should re-engage in ED. From that, upon our formation we constructed a series of scenarios and presented those to an extensive consultation process. From that we developed the strategy. That process is updated every 18 months to two years. I cannot over emphasise how important that process has been to allowing us to operate – to have a mandate to operate. It not only provided us with stakeholder input as you would expect, but it also allowed us to demonstrate strong leadership.

From very early on our thinking was strongly influenced by a number of factors:

- Research showing that a region's prosperity was strongly influenced by its innovativeness, and that was in turn influenced by the degree of interconnectedness.

- The work by Peter Kenyon that showed that a significant portion of youth leave regions like ours because they believe there are no opportunities, rather than because they really want to, and more importantly, it is possible to change that.
- That the private sector is very good at leveraging opportunities so our role was to:
  - Identify and mitigate barriers
  - Channel growth in such a manner that the key values of the region are at worst protected and at best leveraged for additional value creation.
  - Make sure that the market was aware of the opportunities our region has to offer. This was probably the point at which the idea that opportunity might be one of our key competitive advantages entered our thoughts.

Our research and community consultation process in 2000, and updated twice since then, revealed four key issues for the region:

- Workforce issues – “We do not have enough people to realise our potential or even support what we already have.” Availability of labour is now our major constraint on development with only 65 registered unemployed in the region.
- Social inclusion – “Not everyone is equally equipped to participate in what the region has to offer.”
- Infrastructure – “Issues of transportation and communication into and out of the region.”
- Water, energy and climate change. “We need a more sophisticated and ‘holistic’ approach to the way we think about and manage our resources.”

The MRDT embarked upon a strategic planning exercise (that is, it consciously embarked upon a planning exercise *vis-à-vis* “writing” a strategy) that has subsequently been reviewed favourably by various parties. The initial work was undertaken by an external consultant, but completion of the first, and the two subsequent editions of the strategy were produced internally. (refer <http://www.mrdt.co.nz/progress-marlborough/regional-development-strategy>) The strategy is underpinned by a number of principles, some drawn from the consultation process, and some from the expertise and vision brought by the Trustees. They are:

- The quality of life in Marlborough is non-negotiable. That is, strategies that risk compromising the region’s quality of life will not be considered.
- The region must be able to prosper on a sustainable basis, not just within a national context but also, and possibly more importantly, within a global context.
- That to survive, the region must be innovative and that innovativeness is directly related to its degree of connectedness.
- That to participate in the knowledge economy the region must have the capacity to generate and leverage novel knowledge as well as draw knowledge from a broad network of sources.
- That strategies must be aimed specifically at increasing the yield from all activities in the region (economic, cultural, social and environmental).
- That market forces are generally good at developing opportunities once the correct environment is established, so the role of economic development is to create a business friendly environment (or “habitat” as it is referred to in the strategy).

These could apply to any community aspiring to prosper in the modern world, but, none-the-less, distinguish the MRDT in that they constitute a set of guiding strategic principles or policies.

Our vision and mission statement did not appear until the third edition of the strategy. Starting afresh we felt we needed time for the vision to grow. It currently reads:

“To realise the region’s potential as the ‘centre of opportunity’ to become a model high yield community, where all residents are able, if they choose, to enjoy an exemplary quality of life (health and wealth) as fully fledged citizens of the global village.”

Somewhere along the line, and I readily confess, without any particular theoretical base at the time, we began to develop visual representations of the systems that we planned to work in – visual aids to ours and others understanding of the inter-relationships that we all deal with. There's no rocket science involved here but they have proved immensely useful.

- Relationship clusters model
- Integrated resource management
- Business habitat

These involve elements of ecology, and network and chaos and complexity theory. I have to confess that we knew nothing about complexity or network theory when we designed these but we have been assured that that is what we were applying – which probably demonstrates the complexity of complexity theory.

All this drew us to the conclusion that our model of economic development was going to have to revolve around leadership and partnerships and collaboration – because with virtually no financial resources and only a part time administrator, it was clear that we were going to have to get other people to do the things we thought needed to be done. That continues to be our model although obviously we now have the capacity to do more ourselves. The draw back of this model is that the EDA's role in various projects is not always obvious to the paymasters.

“The Marlborough model is really very simple. It is designed to make the best possible use of financial and human capital to the betterment of the region. First, the MRDT is a community based organisation and it draws its mandate from its extensive community consultation and from its partner organisations. **Regional development in this region is taken to be of interest to, and the concern and responsibility of all citizens. That means that the MRDT's role is to provide first and foremost leadership around the region's development, to seek collaboration and co-operation, and to be brave enough to identify and address those initiatives, actions and statements that are not in the best interests of Marlborough.**”

Economic development is not something that can be done by an agency alone. The agency can only lead. It is up to individuals and organisations within the community to make it happen.

Most importantly, we always viewed our strategy document as a communication tool – one with which we had to sell a rather foreign idea to the majority of our stakeholders.

That brings us to two important issues for regional development practitioners – leadership and consensus.

I presume it is the same here because it appears to be a world-wide phenomenon that consensus has become one of the founding principles of our work. Frighteningly, its definition seems to be on the move from one where you reached a point where the majority of people could live with what you were proposing to one where everyone is in agreement. Now I find a couple of problems with the whole idea of consensus decision making.

First – consensus building is usually mind numbingly slow – and we face crises of the most urgent kind. Aiming for consensus is a significant barrier to being able to react at anything like the rate we have to react at in today's world.

The second problem is that we live in enormously diverse communities filled with people who range from the generous to the selfishly ambitious and typically with the idea that long term planning is organising Friday night out with the mates, while we are often working on projects that have long term – 25 to 50 year horizons.

I have to confess that we have an overwhelming desire to J\*DI. So what is the solution.

Leadership! Real leadership. Not what is now often taken as leadership – listening carefully to people and reflecting back their own thoughts – and prejudices. Leadership that has a vision for a better future, a fiery sense of urgency, and the conviction to sell that vision to the community. Is that easy? No it's not. Is it an important role of ED? Yes it is. My personal perspective is that if we are not leading as regional development practitioners than we are not doing our jobs. I suggest that if we are not living in the discomfort zone, pushing the envelope of what is possible, then we are probably doing things that other people would have done anyway. So in other words, we are change agents and if we are not out in that discomfort zone then we risk wrapping strategies around the inevitable.

“We cannot wait for great visions from great people, for they are in short supply at this moment in history. It is up to each of us to light our own small fires in the darkness.”

Charles Handy

Part of my brief today was to discuss how we dealt with these issues. So let's look at consensus first. We never actively sought consensus although we do often achieve it. A government agency researching how we had made so much progress so quickly asked us how we gained consensus. They were surprised when I answered we didn't – we employed a bulldozer. Our philosophy, and I think it is a characteristic of our region, is that when something is identified as needing to be done we follow a well proven process.

First you have to have a compelling conviction that what you are doing is right and you need to ground truth that with people you trust – both close to you and outside your immediate sphere of influence. And I should add here that the more good reasons for doing something the more likely it is to succeed – and deliberately aim for multiple wins.

Next you have to find someone to champion the project and to gather a powerful team of drivers around them. The Wine Research Centre concept was a convergence of ideas from completely disparate origins – the wine industry for obvious reasons had identified the need and the MRDT had identified the opportunity as part of its strategic planning process – but the champion was to emerge from the Marlborough Rugby Football Union.

The Union, like most small unions was grappling with the loss of young talent from the region – names like All Blacks David Hill and Leon MacDonald being examples. The Union Chairman, Mark Peters, is also Chairman of Directors of the Grove Mill Wine Company and the questions were posed at some stage “Could we keep more of our talent if there were better education opportunities, and did the wine industry and Marlborough's growing reputation represent such an opportunity?”

The convergence of these three rather distinct interests provided a compelling case for proceeding with investigations. The Marlborough District Council to its great credit responded very positively to the proposal, contributing substantial funding, human resource and influence.

Again, to its credit, in the only case of its kind in New Zealand, the Council had co-funded the Marlborough Primary Production Research Centre for nearly two decades. This provided critical networks and experience that were to prove essential in bringing this project to fruition. A Steering group comprising representatives of the District Council, wine industry, the wine growers organisation, the research centre, the local polytech, Lincoln University and MRDT was formed.

While the Centre is vitally important for the research it conducts, it is even more important as a metaphor – a symbol of opportunity within the region. Combined with the education partnerships and similar initiatives in aquaculture and aviation, strong signals are being sent to younger people, within and outside Marlborough, that there are genuine opportunities within Marlborough. Even if they choose to leave – the aim is that they will leave with the region as one of their options to return to after education and their OE, etc. In other words, we had at least four reasons for this project:

- A national centre of wine research
- To attract government research funding to our region; and

- To send signals to our young people
- To capture some of those high value jobs

Our experience with sector groups is perhaps interesting. Sector bodies have a vital role to play in the development of their sectors – but at the end of the day they are political bodies usually charged with protecting the interests of members. Our experience has been that it is far more productive to find people within the sectors that share a common culture and eagerness to lead change and work with them. This requires a lot less energy. As an aside – it is always important to look out for and recognise “gate-keepers” people who direct and sometimes stop the flow of information.

This is an opportune time to put all this into perspective with a quick sweep through our region before we look at branding and competitive advantage.

Marlborough has undergone a fundamental economic and social change over the last thirty years. It has seen the emergence of two completely new industries and the rapid development of two others. More than 70% of the current population were not resident in the region 10 years ago.

Marlborough is a region of exceptional climatic and geological diversity – from subtropical rainforest in the north to alpine conditions in the south-west. From rocky shorelines to step mountains with sleeping plains and valleys between. Included in the region is Molesworth station which is considered one of the world's great wilderness areas. At 185,000 Ha it's bigger than some countries and is NZ's largest farm. For comparison, Marlborough is about the same size as Israel but we get on a lot better with our neighbours.

Industries:

- Tourism is probably our largest
- Wine is our number two industry – and certainly the one we are best known for. 70% of the country's export value all developed since 1973, about the same size and age as Napa. In fact our two valleys represent the number one and very soon number two wine regions.
- Aquaculture is number three with 80% of the country's export production – all developed since the early 80's
- Aviation engineering – third largest engineering centre and the airforce's #1 maintenance base. Plus what is arguably the world's most significant collection of flying vintage aircraft and a soon to be opened aviation heritage centre in partnership with Peter Jackson and Weta Workshops.
- Forestry – about a million cubic metres of wood per year
- Last but not least – traditional farming – dominated by beef and sheep.

We have more sunshine than any other region, more wind than most, and rivers suitable for hydro electric production. We sit on the main North South transport route. And that all creates a whole range of opportunities we haven't even started to think about yet. Well – yes - actually we have been thinking about them and we might get to do something about that later in the year. And of course, a grand total of 46,000 people.

Australia's called the “lucky country. We have to be the lucky region – but we struggle to admit that to ourselves.

## **Brand Marlborough**

Now let's have a look at how our regional brand came about. Our diversity presents a challenge from a branding point of view. In marketing, one of the first questions that is asked is “What's your SMP?” Your single minded proposition. Well – we haven't got one – we've got a whole lot of them and no idea which one we should go with. And that's a problem and an opportunity. It's interesting how often that word “opportunity” comes up when you talk about Marlborough. And it's a word that should appear very regularly on the lips of every regional development practitioner, because in today's world opportunity is only limited by our imaginations.

Certainly when it comes to brands, there are two types – those that emerge organically and are typically a product of reality, and those that spring from an ad man's drawing board.

And we have both of these – most places do. Australia and Queensland certainly do – and so does NZ. And for the most part, a large proportion of our brand images have come about through no conscious effort – they are just a reflection of what we are – or were. Now I have no experience with trying to rebrand, my experience is in attempts to protect a brand that has grown from nowhere to stand on the world stage in a period of 30 years with absolutely no management.

I would comment though that understanding your brand requires a really intimate knowledge of those things that make your region special – and we all have those if we dig deep enough – and it is really difficult to see them when you are in the midst of it. It almost seems that you have to be deprived of those values to be able to properly sense them. Maybe that's why we defend things that are being taken from us so tenaciously.

Truth is, we can thank a West Australian company for our brand, our real brand, for whether it reflects the complete essence of the region or not our brand is built around wine and in particular Cloudy Bay. And why would we want to mess with that. Because your brand is about something that you can build your story around and there is absolutely no reason in my mind why we cannot retrofit our story around the wine image – and that is what we are now trying to do. And there is one thing that is very very clear to us. Our greatest brand asset is simple, it's a word, a long awkward word that is sometimes mistaken for an American cigarette brand – but there's no doubt that our brand equity lies in the WORD Marlborough. And I think that is how any regional brand should be – not about tag lines or logos or the BRAND DEVICE but the images and ideas the name summons up in peoples minds.

Then of course there is the brand device – the logo. And we have one of those too. Ten years ago we paid \$100,000 to an expert in regional branding, and they did lot's of focus group work, and all the stuff that creative designers do – and they came up with this.

“Love Marlborough – the region with heart”. It's not bad and our tourism people are using it quite well. But it doesn't exactly set the pulse racing every time you see it. And that is not because it's a poor piece of work but because it has not had a brand building strategy behind it to link all the positive images the region has, and apart from tourism, none of our sectors make a lot of use of it. If there's a lesson here it's that if you are going to do a successful regional branding exercise, then be prepared to spend a lot of money over a long period of time, including at home.

So what are Marlborough's brand values. First – let's not call them brand values. They are values. It's a word that does not need a qualifier. The people in our region are the guardians of those values and they hold them in their hearts and minds. It's taken us five or six years to even get close to understanding what those values are – and even now there are probably 46,000 different versions. We're an interesting place because 70% of our residents have lived in the region for less than ten years – and that means that the regional collective mind or psychology is quite fluid. You actually only discover what those values really are when they are threatened. Certainly our \$100,000 brand research project didn't uncover what they are, they just discovered some intangible factor or factors that we “loved”. We'll come back to this in a moment when we think about competitive advantage

The Marlborough name is our greatest asset as a region. It's value is beyond measure. And it is unprotected, at risk and regularly plagiarised. We have seen French Marlborough Sauvignon blanc, and barbecue tables and even linen bearing the Marlborough name.

Protecting a regional name is one of the great challenges and I openly admit that we are not good at it. Perhaps we are complacent or maybe its like a lot of intellectual property – we can't see it so we don't value it. What ever, any solution lies with the government to enact legislation and then be prepared to defend what is created. Protection mechanisms without willingness to litigate is a waste of time.

As rugby rivals you might be amused to know that a French company has registered the name Eden Park – our #1 rugby ground – and there's nothing that we can do about it. That's the risk that we face. My message – identify your icons and get legal protection on them.

The biggest risk though to any brand name comes from within.

The brand has to reflect reality – or more importantly because we can change reality – reality has to reflect our brand. Poor labour market practices, disregard for the environment, poor product integrity etc etc will destroy a brand in moments. We have recently seen a New Zealand wine (not from Marlborough) delisted by a supermarket chain in Europe because of poor labour practices. And we are certainly not immune to this sort of thing. We must be constantly aware that we live in a world of instant communication. There are no borders, no secrets and no time delays.

And that means that someone has to be the guardian - the brand police – of being able to tell people that what they are doing will damage the region and their own products if they continue. Sometimes you are left wondering....

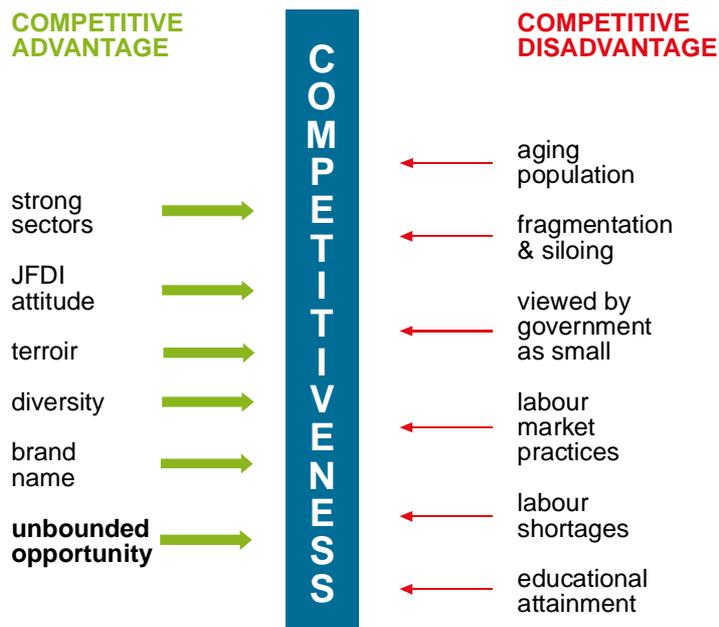
So a huge vulnerability that we do not have any particular answers for.

I do though think that there is a real problem in regional branding – and national branding – think of the images of our region I presented earlier – they were all visually exciting – the things that tourists want to see - we tend to do our branding from a tourism perspective – with pretty pictures – people drinking wine, attractive young people – women in flowing white dresses with equally flowing blonde hair – riding a horse down a long sandy beach. You would think that there is a rule of regional branding that says you have to have these two images. Certainly almost every region in NZ at some time has used those two images – and they are false. And I cannot believe that NZ has just begun a campaign over here using the horse and rider image. And I think if you reflect upon it you will have seen those same images associated with many areas of Australia as well. It's much more difficult and abstract to present images of opportunity and innovation. But branding is about differentiation not sameness.

#### Competitive advantage

Now finally – competitive advantage. With the rate of change it is really very difficult to determine the region's competitive advantage. Three observations I could make:

1. What people outside see as our competitive advantages may be different to those on the inside. Let me provide an analogy. New Zealand is a cool climate country – not as cool as the UK but certainly quite a bit cooler than here. We think that pineapples are exotic and you don't. But conversely, people from the tropics think apples are exotic and we grow them in our gardens and think they are ordinary. Now extrapolate that to your own regions and see if its possible that what we see as competitive advantage might be different to what we think.
2. Be prepared for someone to come along (like the new Sunshine Coast hospital) – apparently without influence from the EDA or ED strategy – and completely change the rules. We're in the midst of just that. We've had a new company in a completely new industry to Marlborough that promises to completely change the face of our economy.
3. Competitiveness is determined by the tension between competitive advantage and disadvantage. Our role is to shift the equilibrium between the two and each side needs different strategies.



And that raises the difficult issue of cause and effect. Naturally those that fund us want to be able to see and measure the results of our work. But there are some problems. We operate in complex systems and no matter how comprehensive the ED function, we are only part of the overall picture. And the new industry is a good example of that. They didn't come to Marlborough because we targeted them – but somewhere along the line they had to have been influenced that Marlborough presented an opportunity – albeit looking from the outside, an unlikely place to locate this particular business.

And for that reason we are strong on the principles of attention economics. We engage in all sorts of projects, readily accept speaking engagements so that we

can tell our story, show off what we think are our competitive advantages. And all the time we are building symbols that support that advantage, be they tangible like the wine centre, or intangible like promoting food miles work – all supporting our true competitive advantage.

Now it might seem blindingly obvious what our competitive advantage is when you have 70% of the national wine industry – 80% of the aquaculture industry, and the nation's third largest aviation engineering centre. But we disagree. Our region's competitive advantage is actually in being able to make things happen, the attitudes that made these industries happen – and in using those as metaphors to build further awareness. The MRDT's particular strength is in building relationships and being able to think in a systems context and hence identify and build the interconnections between all these factors.

The “things” that you have only allow you to play the game. It is how you think about what you have and what you do with those things that provides competitive advantage or disadvantage.

So competitive advantage comes from the presence or absence of particular cultural peculiarities. And because that is so complex – it is almost impossible to replicate. And that represents genuine competitive advantage. Now we all know about cultural differences between countries but they exist between regions as well – and over quite small distances. Our neighbour Nelson is only 110Km away but they do not seem to share our ability to make things happen rapidly. Technically they are probably more democratic – but less innovative.

So we conclude that our real competitive advantage is – *Marlborough is the centre of opportunity*. And we now realise that is just one of many stories that we can use to culture and leverage our competitive advantage – and we now aim for the first time to deliberately develop a new competitive advantage – our ability to tell our stories.

My concluding message is that all this is fine, but it needs to be turned into a form that is practical so –

- **Quantify.** Eg, New Zealand's goal of returning to the top half of the OECD is meaningless unless we know what that requires us to achieve in practical terms and in particular the rate of growth relative to the four countries ahead of us.
- **Cascade and visualise.** For example, we haven't got people to fuel growth so what does that mean in practical terms. Productivity growth. What does that require. Culture change. New investment strategies etc. Reduce those to a form that you can picture in your mind in tangible form.

- **Extrapolate.** We have an ageing population and we know that by 2026 our average age will be 52 years of age based on current projections. What does that mean in terms of the workforce size. Will the total population grow fast enough to maintain the number of working age people. What if it doesn't?
- **Challenge the status quo.** Don't accept the inevitable. If we accept the inevitable all we can do is plan to minimise the pain. Plan to create the future that matches the vision.

So, there we have it. Marlborough draws its competitive advantage from being able to convert opportunity to reality with very short response times. I suggest that in today's world, every region's opportunity is only limited by the imagination and self belief of its leaders and people.

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