

## **Forté Management to welcome new full time consultant**

Blenheim, New Zealand, Sunday, 18 August 2013

*Forté Management - Management and Marketing Consultants* co-owner Helen Smale is joining the practice as full time consultant and coach. She finishes her current role as CEO of the Marlborough Shellfish Quality Programme on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September and will begin work in the practice a few days later.

*"Helen brings a whole new suite of knowledge, expertise and skills to Forté."* says co-owner and Consultant Tony Smale. Forté Management is already recognised as the leader in understanding the impact of Kiwi mindsets on business performance in New Zealand. *"When we wrap that together with Helen's expertise around seafood quality, her experience initiating and leading globally significant game changing innovations, strong 'mission critical' project management and negotiating skills, general management and governance experience in a variety of roles and especially her extensive national and international network of colleagues in industry, science and regulatory authorities, we will provide a greatly expanded offering to our clients."*

*"It became more and more apparent to me over twenty five years in food sector quality assurance management that we need to change our approach and attitude to Quality Assurance."* says Helen. *"Not from a technical perspective. We are considered world leaders in that regard but rather what and how we use it for."* Quality assurance is generally viewed as an obligation to meet regulatory requirements and therefore is a cost burden to be minimised. *"I'm not suggesting that we flash more dollars around but I believe very strongly that we can extract more value from the investment that we have already made and the expertise that we have accumulated."* Businesses, suggests Helen, need to look at how their quality assurance programmes can offer opportunities to provide consumers with the confidence that is now more and more part of their purchase decision processes. *"After all, the definition of quality is fitness for purpose as defined by the consumer."*

*"We will be announcing our new consulting products to help firms respond positively to this consumer trend as soon as we have them ready. In the meantime we welcome enquiries."* says Tony. When Helen joins the practice in September she will lead the development and delivery of this new service package. She will of course also continue her interest in aquaculture and molluscan shellfish safety.

Following careers in science, audiometry and dairy and food quality assurance, Helen joined the aquaculture industry in a part time role 18 years ago. She worked first as Assistant Executive Officer of the NZ Marine Farming Association and NZ Mussel Industry Council. *"Those were exciting times for the fledgling industry and we were involved in laying the foundations of the industry's success."*

Helen's background in quality assurance saw her rapidly promoted to managing the Marlborough Shellfish Quality Programme. The programme manages the food safety compliance of the growing waters across the Top of the South. MSQP is widely regarded as the world leader in this field. This new position saw Helen serve on, chair and manage various national and international advisory bodies including representing New Zealand at international forums and as a member of the Advisory Committee of the International Conference for Molluscan Shellfish Safety. Helen also served a two year term as Chairman of the Advisory Committee. She remains the only industry person from New Zealand appointed to the Advisory Committee and one of only two internationally.

Helen considers that her most notable contribution to the aquaculture industry is leading on behalf of industry, alongside the Cawthron Institute and Regulatory Authorities, an entirely new approach to assuring the food safety of shellfish. That methodology replaced the old and unreliable “bioassay” with a chemical based quantitative methodology that has now been adopted throughout the world including by the Australian, EU and USA food safety authorities.

In addition to developing her new role within Forté Management, Helen has commenced study for the Diploma in Professional Coaching. *“Coaching fits my natural approach to consultancy so building on that through developing my professional qualifications and accreditation makes perfect sense.”*

ENDS

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