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A young finance professional shares his experience of the INFINZ mentoring programme

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Economic Development
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PLUS: MARKET DATA AND ANALYSIS FROM THE PAST SIX MONTHS



CULTIVATING CHAMPIONS

Harry Hewitt, a business development manager in derivatives at NZX, shares his experience of the 2015 INFINZ mentoring programme. Hewitt's mentor is Mike Faville, head of debt capital markets at BNZ.

Through my university years I was involved in a high-performance sports academy. I was there with 10 or so others, and we were supported by all the people you would need to deliver sporting excellence week in and week out. At the academy there was also a strong emphasis on off-field activities like goal setting, self- and peer-review sessions, mental preparation and so on.

But if you replaced beep tests with a laptop and Powerade with coffee, then I think you could compare the academy I attended to the INFINZ mentoring programme; I think of it as a high-performance sports academy for the corporate world.

The scheme's objective is to 'develop younger or less experienced people in the industry and provide a new and interesting proposition'. When I was accepted into the one-year programme, I was initially uncertain and reserved about the process. But after the first few meetings, and by drawing on my previous experience in the sports academy, I realised the programme would be a valuable chance for me to accelerate my professional development.

When I look back over the past few months, the aspect of the scheme I've valued the most is having access to a mentor who is extremely knowledgeable and well regarded within the industry, who can act as a source of independent advice. When I have a problem or just want to debate an idea, my mentor has been available and keen to talk it through, offer some advice from personal experience, and raise interesting perspectives I hadn't previously considered.

I've found the structure of the programme flexible, which is a real positive for me because it's allowed my mentor and me to be selective around what we do for the year. For example, an important part of my role with NZX is presenting and client interaction. Having identified this with my mentor, we're planning to work together on elevating my skills in this area. It's the small things that help an individual stand out in the crowd, which is something this programme addresses.

I'm really looking forward to continuing with the scheme for the rest of the year and encourage others to get involved next time around. ■

IMAGE: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

FLYING THE FLAG

Ambassadors in firms in Auckland and Wellington are now further connecting under-30s to the work of INFINZ's Young Finance Professionals (YFP) initiative.



The initiative, which kicked off activities in early 2014, has massively grown the number of YFPs involved with INFINZ; in the two years from August 2013 to August 2015 their ranks have swelled from 47 to 323, including student members.

The recently introduced ambassador programme has involved appointing a YFP ambassador in many of the major firms working in the capital markets industry, explains YFP chair Richard Milsom, including banks, and law and investment firms.

"Having a YFP advocate at each firm has benefits in two ways," says Milsom. "Firstly it really helps us engage with everyone in a firm, from recent graduates through to the more experienced YFPs. And secondly, it strengthens the pipeline of information in terms of advocacy, and the needs and wants of the wider group. It provides a direct channel to hear from our members and we're getting a much richer and wider flow of information."

The focus of the YFPs' activities is to further educate young professionals and help them to rub shoulders with others so they can broaden their knowledge of both the wider capital markets industry and the opportunities available within it.

YFP events over the past six months have included an innovation discussion with entrepreneur Vaughan Rowsell and ASB's Barbara Chapman; an evening with Prime Minister John Key; and a panel discussion on the topic 'Are we in a bubble?' in Auckland. In Wellington, Andrew Bascand and Stephen Toplis headlined a

discussion about the hot-button issue of Auckland house prices, and in December serial entrepreneur and World Class New Zealander Claudia Batten will be addressing a YFP audience.

Milsom says all events were oversubscribed, and the calibre of speakers has helped engage YFPs with the education message.

"There are so many moving parts to the capital markets, and the more people can learn about areas outside their immediate focus the better it is not only for their understanding of the role they play in the bigger picture, but for the wider industry as a whole."

Milsom emphasises that the strength of the initiative lies in its board, which in Auckland includes Briar Malpas (Chapman Tripp), Anna Dorrington (PwC), Simon Worker (Cameron Partners) and Lucy Drake (ASB); and in Wellington includes Fiona Foster (PwC), Raiko Shareef (BNZ) and Philippa Poole (Meridian Energy). ■

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RICHARD MILSOM

