

Welcome to the first in a series of articles where we chat with previous Westpac Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce Business Award winners and look at what they're up to now.

It's six years since Sunrise Cleaning received the Westpac Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce Supreme Business Award yet owner Bruce Farley says it's still paying dividends.

“The biggest reward is the kudos. People remember the business awards. They still associate that with our business.”

Mr Farley established Sunrise Cleaning nearly 30 years ago when he moved from South Auckland to Upper Moutere. He noticed a Richmond bank was doing renovations so he approached the manager to see if they needed a cleaner and promptly landed his first cleaning job – one hour every evening.

He managed to get another job cleaning for Nelson Pine Industries when it was “a few portacom offices in a paddock”, followed by a couple of other contracts which together provided him full time work. It kept snowballing and he now employs 120 staff (including seven on site at Nelson Pine Industries). Sunrise Cleaning has about 90 permanent customers and has only recently shifted from the Moutere Hills property where it first established to a more business-like office environment in Richmond Mall.

Mr Farley joined the Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce at an early stage in his business development, mainly to network with others but he also quickly spotted the opportunity in entering its business awards.

“It's an old cliché but it is a very good way to look at your business. You get so involved, especially when you're growing, and the process of entering the awards is a good way of reviewing where you're heading.”

Mr Farley says they under cooked their first couple of entries yet still managed to win category awards. “That certainly gave us some confidence that we were getting something right.”

The last time they entered, Sunrise Cleaning had grown to the point where it was “up with the big boys” in the large business category.

“We thought, ‘this time, we're going to do it properly’. We locked ourselves away in a cabin for five days on the coast. That was the best way of doing it to overcome that procrastination.”

Mr Farley – who has also served as a judge after winning the supreme business award – says it takes time and effort to develop succinct answers that also showcase your passion for the business.

“This trick is not to be overwhelmed by the questions. It can seem daunting and sometimes it feels like you're repeating information but you play to your strengths.”

Aside from the publicity exposure that stemmed from winning the supreme award, Sunrise Cleaning really benefited from a seminar, The Natural Step, which was provided by the Cawthron Institute as part of the prize package.

“We took all our key people along. That got us quite inspired.”

Cawthron's seminar enabled Sunrise Cleaning to get ahead of the game on sustainability issues within the cleaning industry. It's a trend that Mr Farley is seeing an increasing interest in, to varying degrees. “It's really interesting to me that some companies are paranoid about rubbish but not what goes down the sink.”

Sunrise Cleaning uses a range of natural products and has also purchased new technology that's enabled a huge reduction in water use. One contact that he recently quoted on required completion of a 46 page document solely related to sustainability and environmental issues.

Mr Farley doesn't rule out entering the business awards again as he's well aware of the need to continue growth and development, and the focus the awards can bring to that.

"The bigger you get, the harder it is to maintain a service. That's why we've moved here and re-invented ourselves a bit lately," he says.

FACT BOX

Sunrise Cleaning

Founded 1986

Based in Richmond

Employs 120 people

1994 Medium Business Award

1996 Excellence in Service Award

2009 Supreme Award

Entries for this year's Westpac Nelson Tasman Business Awards close on Friday, September 25

For more information on the awards and how to enter, see www.commerce.org.nz

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