

For Immediate Release

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Young Kiwi Businessman Returns Home to Win Tourism Entrepreneur Award

Christchurch, New Zealand (October 20, 2010) - This is the classic story of a young New Zealand businessman who has returned home and 'done good'.

Ryan Sanders, owner and director of Haka Tours, has recently been internationally recognised for his innovation in business and marketing, being awarded the highly acclaimed PATA Young Tourism Entrepreneur Award in the 2010 Tourism Industry Awards.

After the initial disappointment of not fully realising a professional rugby career in the UK due to a consistent Achilles injury, Ryan turned to the corporate world where his aspirations and work ethics were rewarded with three promotions within two years, working within the Human Resources department for the Royal Bank of Scotland. However, his dream of returning home to New Zealand spurred thoughts of creating a tourism based business, inspired by a passion for travelling and adventure instilled an early age: to develop an adventure tour company that highlighted his favourite locations and activities with New Zealand.

With no experience in tourism, Ryan decided to follow this dream and develop an all-inclusive business plan for the venture. "I developed a comprehensive business plan and competitive analysis with the initial thoughts that I would find the business model unfeasible and I could finally let the idea go". However, as the plan was further developed, he identified specific gaps in the marketplace that could be capitalised ... the birth of Haka Tours.

"The concept behind Haka Tours was to create a high adrenaline fuelled adventure tour for the middle market, with a focus on small groups, personalised service and jam-packed itineraries. The flexibility to add-on a range of innovative adventure packs provides the customer to create an experience that is unique to their desires ... while not breaking the bank"

Starting the business from the UK and operating remotely certainly provided challenges within the first 16 months of operations, where tour guides and managers were hired in New Zealand to provide the operational base for the business. Rather than utilising the traditional routes to market afforded to many tourist operations, Ryan took into account the changing trends in consumer behaviour which was tending greatly towards the searching for, and purchase of, services and products online.

"The utilisation of the internet and a central website allowed a direct line to the consumer, to build upon the growing trend of online shopping and changing decision making behaviour being expressed with the parameters of our target market, while keeping our adventure tours at a great price without the high commissions associated with many travel agency booked experiences."

After 16 months of 90 plus hours per week, with the dual roles of Recruitment Manager for the Royal Bank of Scotland while building Haka Tours, the tourism operation was becoming financially viable for Ryan to concentrate all his efforts on.

“One of the greatest feelings was building a business from scratch where it has now the financial viability to allow me to return home to New Zealand, where I could continue to develop Haka Tours into one of the world’s leading tourism operations”.

And from here, there was no stopping him. The vertical integration of product and service offerings, development of strategic relationships with key activity and accommodation suppliers, implementation of cost effective and innovative social media and video marketing campaigns and the development of a shared service business model has enabled the business to thrive. Rapid expansion plans has seen the purchase of a ten bedroom lodge in Christchurch.

The formal recognition of these efforts culminated in the presentation of the PATA Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Mr Sander’s prize includes \$3000 cash, a trophy and ongoing management advice.

“I feel truly honoured to receive the award as there were some great businesses and individuals who applied. This reward has strengthened my resolve and aims for building the business further and fine tuning our offerings to the market to create a tourist experience found nowhere else in the world”.

With the determination to succeed and the obvious skills to make it happen, this is a space to keep a close eye on.

ENDS

Haka Tours is a Christchurch based adventure Tour Company which focuses on affordable, flexible and action packed adventure experiences and snow tours throughout New Zealand (www.hakatours.com)

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