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Cover: Chef Luis Cabrera, the man behind Besos Margaritas.

With thanks to our partners ...



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From My Perspective

Phil Clode, Business Development Manager, phil@rosebankbusiness.co.nz



Rheem Opening

On March 27th, we were invited to the grand opening of the new Rheem Innovation & Learning Centre at their headquarters and manufacturing site here in Rosebank, with the Energy Minister Hon. Simon Watts cutting the ribbon to open the facility.

Rheem is a leading global manufacturer of residential and commercial water heating, heating, cooling, and refrigeration products. In New Zealand, the brand has operated since 1958 and is primarily known for its extensive range of hot water solutions, with nearly 80% of its local products still manufactured at its Rosebank-based facility.

Rheem was founded in 1925 in California by brothers Richard and Donald Rheem. The first New Zealand manufacturing site was established in Tawa, Wellington, in 1958, where they originally manufactured steel drums before expanding into water heating in the 1960s.

The plant in Rosebank was built in 1974, and Rheem® Mains Pressure Water Heating manufacturing began in Auckland later that same year.

Since 1988, Rheem has been an independent subsidiary of Paloma Industries, based in Japan.

Rheem have always been a wonderful supporter of the RBA and our endeavours. We have had the honour of having former Rheem general managers Steve Bullock and Craig Bodmin on our board and as our patrons and Financial Controller Tania Jordon as our Treasurer.

In this issue

April marks the end of the financial year for many businesses, and our feature writer Beth has written an article about a timely topic for those thinking of tightening their belts: the ins and outs of restructures.



Last week was New Zealand's first-ever Debt Awareness Week, organised by DebtManagers. DebtManagers commissioned new research about debt specifically for Debt Awareness Week, and the article on page 15 takes a deeper look at those findings.

Finally, Beth spoke to Mexican-born chef Luis Cabrera to discuss the fascinating journey he took to found his margarita business, Besos Margaritas, which he operates from here in Rosebank. From cooking for former President Obama to winning gold medals all over the world for his bottled margaritas, Luis has worked hard for his success at every turn. If you're a fan of margaritas, you'll want to check this one out.

Regards,

Phil Clode,
Business Development Manager

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Dr Grant Hewison

Waste Bylaw Changes Underway

Auckland Council is currently reviewing its Waste Management and Minimisation Bylaw. The Rosebank Business Association took the opportunity to provide feedback.

Why the bylaw is being reviewed

Auckland Council has found that the current waste rules still allow a number of problems to occur across the region. These include recycling contamination, bins blocking footpaths, poor storage of waste, and gaps in information about how waste is collected and disposed of. The council has said that while the existing bylaw is still needed, it could be improved to make the rules clearer, remove duplication, and strengthen enforcement where necessary.

The proposed changes include updating licensing rules for waste collectors and facilities, clarifying requirements for storing and separating waste, and improving data collection to help plan for better waste minimisation in the future. These are all sensible goals, and the RBA has told the council that we support the overall intention to improve waste outcomes across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Industrial areas need practical rules

At the same time, we have emphasised that industrial and commercial areas like Rosebank operate very differently from residential neighbourhoods, and the rules need to recognise that.

Many businesses here store materials outdoors, bulk up recyclable products before collection, or use specialist collectors for particular waste streams. Requirements that work well in suburban streets may not always fit an industrial site where space, volume, and operational needs are quite different.

In our feedback, we asked the council to make sure the final bylaw includes practical guidance for industrial businesses, especially where new storage or containment standards are introduced. Where upgrades are needed, there should also be reasonable timeframes so businesses can make changes without unnecessary disruption.

Possible changes to licensing

One proposal that could affect some Rosebank operators is the removal of the current exemption for collectors handling less than 20 tonnes of waste per year, along with extending licensing requirements to more types of waste facilities.

While we understand the council's wish to improve oversight and data collection, we have pointed out that many small or specialist operators provide useful services to industrial businesses, such as collecting pallets, shrink wrap, scrap materials, or packaging.

These activities often carry low environmental risk, but the new rules could add extra paperwork and cost.

We have suggested that the council should consider targeted exemptions or simplified requirements for low-risk specialist services.

Waste separation and storage

The proposed bylaw also places more emphasis on separating waste before collection to improve recycling quality. The RBA supports this in principle, but we have asked for clear and practical guidance that reflects the types of materials commonly produced in industrial areas.

Many businesses deal with mixed plastics, timber, metals, or manufacturing off-cuts, and separation rules need to be realistic. We have encouraged the council to provide templates, advice, and education so businesses can adapt without sudden cost increases.

Working together for better outcomes

One of the key points in our submission is that waste minimisation works best when councils and businesses work together. Business associations like ours can help communicate with members, test new ideas, and support practical solutions that fit local conditions.

We have encouraged Auckland Council to work with industry groups on education programmes, pilot projects, and new recycling or reuse initiatives in commercial precincts like Rosebank. This partnership approach is more likely to produce good environmental results without creating unnecessary compliance burdens.

Keeping members informed

The Rosebank Business Association will continue to follow this bylaw review closely and keep members updated as the process continues. Our aim is to make sure the final rules support better waste management, while still allowing Rosebank businesses to operate efficiently.

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Kim Watts RBA Executive Engagement Manager
Phone: 021 639 509, kim@rosebankbusiness.co.nz



Annual Fruit Care Packs

As March draws to a close each year, a familiar and much-anticipated initiative quietly makes its way through local doorsteps: the RBA's Fruit Care Packs. First introduced in March 2022, this simple, yet meaningful tradition has grown into a cornerstone of the organisation's commitment to supporting the local business community. While the concept is modest, its impact continues to resonate just as strongly today as it did in its inaugural year.



At its heart, the Fruit Care Pack initiative reflects a philosophy grounded in wellbeing and connection. With the guiding sentiment that "to care is to share," the RBA set out to give back in a way that was both practical and symbolic. By delivering fresh fruit directly to businesses, the intention was not only to provide a healthy offering, but also to encourage workplaces to pass that care along to their staff. In doing so, the act of giving extends beyond the initial gesture,

fostering a ripple effect of kindness within each organisation.

What has remained especially striking over the years is the consistent response from recipients. Each delivery is met with genuine surprise, gratitude, and appreciation. For many, it is an unexpected moment of positivity during a busy workday – a reminder that their contribution to the local business ecosystem is valued. These small, yet powerful interactions reinforce the importance of maintaining strong, supportive ties within the community, particularly in times when connection can easily be overlooked.

Get to know your neighbour!

Complementing this spirit of giving is another March initiative focused on bringing people together in a more direct and personal way. In alignment with Auckland Council's Neighbour Day, which encourages communities to connect throughout the month, the RBA partnered with Encounter Church to host a free Harbourside BBQ lunch under the theme "Get to Know Your Neighbour." The idea was sparked when Melissa Yalomatua from Encounter Church approached the RBA with a shared vision of fostering stronger relationships among local businesses. From this collaboration, a plan quickly took shape: a welcoming, informal gathering where people could step away from their desks, share a meal, and engage with those around them.

Held on Thursday, 19 March, the event saw 375 registered employees to come together in the church's outdoor area. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly, with good food providing the perfect foundation for conversation and connection. For many attendees, it was a rare opportunity to meet the people working just next door, individuals who, despite their proximity, might otherwise remain strangers.

Adding further value to the occasion, Kim from the RBA addressed attendees on the topic of security. The discussion extended beyond business premises to include personal safety considerations,

highlighting practical steps individuals and organisations can take to protect themselves. With the ongoing challenges surrounding fuel costs, particular attention was given to vehicle security, encouraging people to be mindful of where they park and to take precautions against petrol siphoning.

Events like the Harbourside BBQ lunch underscore the tangible benefits



of getting to know your neighbours. Stronger relationships between businesses can lead to increased collaboration, improved communication, and a greater sense of collective responsibility. From a safety perspective, familiarity fosters vigilance; people are more likely to notice unusual activity and look out for one another when there is an established sense of community.

Together, the Fruit Care Packs and the "Get to Know Your Neighbour" BBQ highlight the RBA's ongoing commitment to nurturing both wellbeing and connection within the local business landscape. Whether through a shared piece of fruit or a shared meal, these initiatives serve as a reminder that community thrives when people take the time to care, connect, and look out for one another.

A sincere thank you goes to Melissa and the dedicated volunteers from Encounter Church, whose generosity and effort made the lunch possible. Their warm hospitality and willingness to serve ensured that the event was not only successful, but genuinely memorable for all who attended.

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Rosebank News & Events

News, views and any other tidbits from the Rosebank Business Community.



EMA Legal Briefing - Employment Law Update

Employment law continues to evolve - and keeping up has never been more important for employers. Join the EMA's Legal Update for Employers, presented by Mauro Barsi, Head of Legal, and Sarah Lim, Senior Associate, for a practical briefing on the latest legal developments affecting New Zealand businesses.

The session will cover upcoming legislative changes, recent case law, managing employee exits, handling long-term medical incapacity, and what employers need to know about the holidays reform.

Designed for decision-makers, this update will help you

understand your obligations, reduce risk, and navigate complex employment issues with confidence. Employers are encouraged to attend and make the most of this timely legal insight.

EMA Seminar

Where: Browne St Eatery,
50 Rosebank Rd, Avondale
When: Tuesday, 12 May 2026
Time: 7:30am - 9:15am
RSVP: maureen@rosebankbusiness.co.nz



Western Mailing Hosting

Join us for an evening at Western Mailing

The Rosebank Business Association invites members to a networking evening hosted by Western Mailing at their Auckland facility.

This is a great opportunity to meet the Western Mailing team, see their operation firsthand, and connect with fellow local businesses in a relaxed setting.

Western Mailing specialises in secure digital and physical customer communications. With SOC 2 Type II attestation, they ensure customer data is protected at every step - from data handling through to final delivery across mail, email, print, SMS, invoicing, and more.

With over 40 years' experience supporting New Zealand organisations, Western Mailing understands the importance of getting communications right - particularly for businesses that can't afford a privacy breach.

Western Mailing Hosting

Where: 461 Rosebank Road
When: Thursday, 28 May 2026
Time: 5pm-7pm
RSVP: maureen@rosebankbusiness.co.nz

A Business Opportunity: Rosebank Peninsula Coastal Restoration Project

If you're a business owner on the Rosebank Peninsula, there's a unique opportunity to bring your team together while making a lasting impact on the local environment.

The tidal edges surrounding your workplace are more than just part of the industrial landscape - they are living ecosystems that support biodiversity, improve water quality, and contribute to the wellbeing of the wider community. At the Whau River Catchment Trust, we are restoring these areas through the Rosebank Peninsula Coastal Restoration Project, and we invite local businesses to be part of this work.

Years of development and stormwater runoff have impacted this coastline, but hands-on restoration is making a real difference. Activities such as planting native species, weeding invasive plants, and mulching help stabilise shorelines, rebuild habitats, and encourage the return of native wildlife.

Organising a corporate volunteer day is a simple and meaningful way to engage



your team. It offers a chance to step outside the workplace, work together in a new environment, and contribute to something tangible. Many Rosebank businesses find these experiences strengthen team connections, boost morale, and support their sustainability goals.

We provide all tools, guidance, and support - no experience needed. Whether you're interested in a one-off event or ongoing involvement, it's easy to get started.

To register your interest, contact gilbert@whauriver.org.nz or 0274 378 867.

Forty Years of Care

Hospice West Auckland, our hospice, is celebrating 40 years serving our community. Rena Owen, Angela Bloomfield, Joe Naufahu, Fleur Saville, Simon Dallow, and Te Radar all have a connection to West Auckland and are encouraging all of us – those who know that Hospice West Auckland is worth its weight in gold – to give towards the charity's Annual Appeal, which is on now.

In November last year, Hospice West Auckland created He Whare Korowai, a "Home from Home" in Te Atatū. This welcoming, purpose-built space allows patients to receive specialist care

close to their community and, whenever possible, return home again. For those who cannot remain at home, it provides comfort, dignity, and expert support for both patients and their whānau.

Our community's support will help He Whare Korowai and Hospice West Auckland's community care team keep delivering the best end-of-life care possible. The charity hopes to raise \$100,000 from this appeal, so every donation, big or small, will count! Visit hwa.org.nz to donate, and happy 40th anniversary to Hospice West Auckland!

40 Years of Care

Our Hospice West Auckland's Annual Appeal is now on. There's never been a better time to celebrate and commemorate.

Please give today.

West Auckland
hospice
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He rā hou, he oranga ngākau



40
Years of Care
Hospice West Auckland
EST.1986

www.hwa.org.nz

Create + Connect: Paint and Sip Evening

In March the RBA hosted a Create & Connect - Paint & Sip evening as a relaxed after-hours networking event for members. The guided painting session provided an opportunity for attendees to connect with other RBA Members in a more informal setting. The event was well received, with positive feedback from participants and strong engagement throughout the evening.



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Crafted to Perfection

Luis Cabrera's Award-Winning Besos Margaritas

What meal pairs perfectly with a classic margarita? According to Chef Luis Cabrera, the man behind Besos Margaritas, you can take your pick. Mexican, Latin American, Asian food, Italian, even pizza, fish and chips, burgers or barbeque - his Margarita Clásica goes with almost anything. And for good reason, too. The Mexican-born chef and entrepreneur manufactures his award-winning pre-made cocktails right here in Rosebank, and he has dedicated his time and talent to making sure each bottle is the perfect blend.

"It's so important to pair your food with the right beverage," says Luis, who has cooked for the likes of Metallica, Foo Fighters, Pearl Jam, and even former President Obama thanks to the success of his two Besos Latinos restaurants here in New Zealand. Now, having closed both locations in 2022, he's happily at the helm of Besos Margaritas.

The line of pre-made cocktails comes in flavours like Clásica, Habanero, Espresso Margarita, Agave Sour, and Pasion. "Besos" is Spanish for "kisses," which, Luis explains, is how Mexicans drink tequila. "We kiss it," he says. "We don't do shots. A good tequila mezcal can take 10 years to be made, and you never have lime or salt with it. You just kiss it."

Until he was well on his way to becoming a sought-after chef, Luis wasn't an alcohol aficionado - far from it. While travelling Europe as he learned the trade, his mentor's chief complaint was that he insisted on drinking juice or water with every meal. "I was working full time with a master chef from the Italian Chefs Federation, cooking and eating some of the most impressive meals I've ever had in my life," recalls Luis, "and then drinking water or having cranberry juice or apple juice - it was like almost like a sacrilege to him." Finally, Luis was convinced to try a particular wine with a meal as "a favour," and he immediately understood the value of a perfect pairing.

Fast forward to his move to New Zealand and the opening of his first restaurant. With his focus





firmly on ensuring the best possible dining experience for his guests, Luis found himself growing frustrated with the inconsistent quality of the margaritas made by his staff, despite the training and recipe book.

“My bar staff were unintentionally modifying the recipe all the time,” he says. “It was very inconsistent, and due to the staff rotation, it was all over the place: sometimes good, sometimes average, sometimes terrible.”

Besides not being good for business, the middling margaritas also weren't good for Luis's food. “It was always a concern that if the margarita was too acidic, or too sweet, or too unbalanced, it was going to affect my food. As a chef, I cannot rely on this inconsistency. I care about my recipes and my menu too much to risk ruining it with the wrong pairing. So I created a blend myself.”

As the story goes, Luis “put the ingredients required for a classic margarita in front of me, and then I started playing around until I found a balance that worked for my food.” But “playing around” might be a bit of an understatement. Luis was methodical in his creation of the perfect Margarita Clásica, which was his first bottled offering. “For me, it wasn't just about what I was putting in, but the quality and the right amount of the ingredients,” he says. He describes adding elements one drop or one gram at a time and experimenting with what flavour profile he could achieve by blending at a colder/warmer temperature or by letting some ingredients infuse first before he added the next. “As soon as I was finished the blend, I was expecting a ‘Wow’ factor. I

needed to feel like, ‘Oh my God, I love the aroma coming out of this blend with all my heart, and the taste is perfect.’ It's very subjective, but that's what I wanted to give my customers.”

His patient approach paid off. Luis trialed the pre-made drink at his restaurant, and the margaritas were so popular - and arrived to his diners' tables so quickly - that Luis started to hear some unexpected feedback. His patrons believed that they'd received the wrong order, or that the margaritas couldn't be freshly made, because they'd arrived so quickly.

“In the beginning, my waiters had to explain to the customers that this was the chef's recipe, but if you don't like it, you don't pay,” he says. Unsurprisingly, his diners accepted those conditions, and the Margarita Clásica grew so popular that by the time he opened his second restaurant in Wynyard Quarter, he had stopped offering any other cocktails.

But it was during the Covid lockdowns that the margaritas' star really began to rise. With restaurants only able to offer takeaway - and cocktails being outside what was permitted for delivery - Luis looked at bottling his margaritas and selling them via a local liquor store. Soon, the drinks were selling by the case, until their profits eclipsed what Luis was earning from his two restaurants.

Closing the restaurants he had founded with his wife, Cecilia, was “a tough decision,” but it didn't slow his momentum. Luis threw himself into his new venture, first bottling the margaritas in his garage before receiving support from investors to open the factory on Rosebank Road. His next move was to

get some exposure for his new brand - which he achieved by sending out bottles to every celebrity chef in New Zealand. On his website, you can see the results: reviews from the likes of Peter Gordon, Simon Gault, and Michael Meredith, using words like “game changing,” “extraordinary,” and “even better than most freshly bar made.” Cameron Douglas, New Zealand's sole Master Sommelier, called Besos Margaritas “authentic and delicious! The only pre-mixed margarita worth considering.”

With such high praise from experts here at home, it's no surprise that Besos Margaritas has won awards internationally, too; the tally of medals earned stands at fourteen and counting. With little prior knowledge of the industry - or its high standards - Luis astonished long-time liquor aficionados by winning gold after gold before he even had a signature look for his brand.

“For the first competitions, I didn't even have an official bottle,” he recounts. “So I just put the margarita into a glass milk bottle and sent it. Luckily, it was a blind tasting competition, so they didn't look at the bottle or the label.”

Luis attributes the success of his margaritas to more than his talent in the kitchen. True, he created his winning formula “drop by drop,” but at the heart of Luis's approach to both food and drink is a deep appreciation for the care at the heart of the craft.

“I grew up in Jalisco, where tequila is made, so for me, creating a margarita wasn't just about adding random ingredients to the tequila,” he explains. “It was about finding a way to keep the tequila as the king of my cocktail, respectfully complementing it and maintaining its true essence. I went and talked to the people on the land; I literally sat down with the people who cut the agave plant. People who make this kind of artisanal tequila care about who's buying the product, so when I sat down with three generations of tequila makers and enjoyed the moment together, I told them, ‘I don't want to waste all your effort - I want to make the most of your creation worldwide.’ The main thing is to create with love, with respect, and with authenticity.”

For more information or to shop the full range of Besos Margaritas, visit <https://www.drinkbesos.com>.

Story by Beth Caunter

DebtManagers' Debt Week

Tackles Challenging Facts About Kiwis and Debt

New research launched for New Zealand's first Debt Awareness Week shows that debt is a normal and positive enabling part of life for many Kiwis - but that stress, shame, and silence remain widespread.

According to the research commissioned by DebtManagers, New Zealand's leading purchaser of difficult debt, 60% percent of New Zealanders have struggled with debt or are struggling now. But the news isn't all bad, says DebtManager's GM Commercial Isaac Manase.

"Debt is an important part of everyday life," notes Isaac. "It can help people buy a home, get a car, manage unexpected costs, support their family, and invest in education. But our research also shows debt stress is widespread, and too many people are struggling alone."

DebtManagers specialises in socially responsible debt management, helping rehabilitate people through fairer repayment plans with no fees or excessive interest. The research commissioned by the company, which was conducted by Talbot Mills Research, shows that among the six in ten New Zealanders who have struggled with debt

either now or in the past, the burden is unevenly spread. Younger people and renters are more likely to be in difficulty, and 74% of Māori respondents have struggled with debt or are struggling now.

But the findings also show that debt plays an important role in many New Zealanders' lives, with 56% holding a neutral or positive view of debt – including 30% who say it has helped them achieve important goals, like buying a home, covering unexpected costs, and buying a car.

With these facts in hand, the aim of Debt Awareness Week (March 23-29) was simple but powerful: to create a healthier, more open, and supportive conversation about debt in New Zealand.

"Debt Awareness Week is about recognising what debt can enable," says Isaac, "while also being honest about what happens when it becomes difficult and how we make it easier for people to seek support without judgement."

The week kicked off with a breakfast function, where the new research was unveiled to a gathering of business, community, and political leaders. The

findings were then unpacked via a panel discussion with three experts from the financial and credit management industry: FinCap Senior Policy Advisor Jake Lilley, Centrix Chief Operating Officer Monika Lacey, and Isaac himself.

The panel was united on several opinions. Most people want to do the right thing and pay their bills on time – but life circumstances, such as job loss, illness, relationship breakdown, or unexpected events can quickly turn manageable debt into something much harder. Many people try to sort things out on their own first, often juggling multiple debts in a way that's impossible to sustain. Simpler, clearer pathways, the panel agreed, can make it easier for customers to engage with financial management services earlier – and the success stories when people get back on track deserve celebration.

But above all, the panel was firm that a new lens is long overdue on the issue of debt. Too much of the conversation, they agreed, has historically been shaped by blame and stigma, even though debt stress is common and widespread. It's an approach that has left a mark on the national psyche; 86% of those surveyed



in the research believed that people feel embarrassed to admit they are struggling, and 69% believed that most people would judge someone who cannot manage their debt. Among those who have struggled with debt, only 25% said they spoke to a financial adviser or community support service, such as a financial mentor.

More than a third said they told no one.

“Many people still feel embarrassed to admit they are struggling,” says Isaac. “That tells us shame and stigma are making a hard situation even harder.

“We wanted Debt Awareness Week to help change that. Seeking support should not feel shameful, and nobody should feel they have to deal with debt problems alone.”

Now that Debt Awareness Week has come to a close, Isaac and the team at DebtManagers are hopeful that a new dialogue around debt has been successfully sparked. “Let’s recognise the good things debt can enable in our lives, but seek help when it is needed,” says Isaac. “There are free financial mentors around the country, and companies also have ways they can support people who are under pressure.

“Debt is common in our lives. We need to be able to talk about it more openly, both the opportunities it can create and the pressure it can cause, so people can get help earlier and without judgement.”

If your business finds itself waiting on customers to pay what they owe for your goods or services, DebtManagers has a number of tips for dealing with consumer arrears:

- Engage, don’t just chase.

- Communicate early with clarity and empathy.
- Explain options before consequences and make the next steps realistic and achievable.
- Reduce friction and mixed messages.
- Work smoothly with support providers in complex cases.

Remember, says Isaac, that small wins matter. “Re-engagement and a clear plan are often the first step to sustainable resolution.”

If your customers need help with their debt, DebtManagers recommends the following resources:

- A financial mentor who offers free advice and assistance.
- MoneyTalks for support and connections with financial mentors.
- DebtFix for a debt solution.
- The Salvation Army for help with budgeting, life skills, and other support.
- Call/text 1737 (Need to Talk?) for debt affecting mental health.
- CAP Debt Help (Christians Against Poverty) .
- Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Employee Assistance Programmes available at many workplaces.

For the full research commissioned by DebtManagers, visit: <https://debtmanagers.co.nz/blog>.

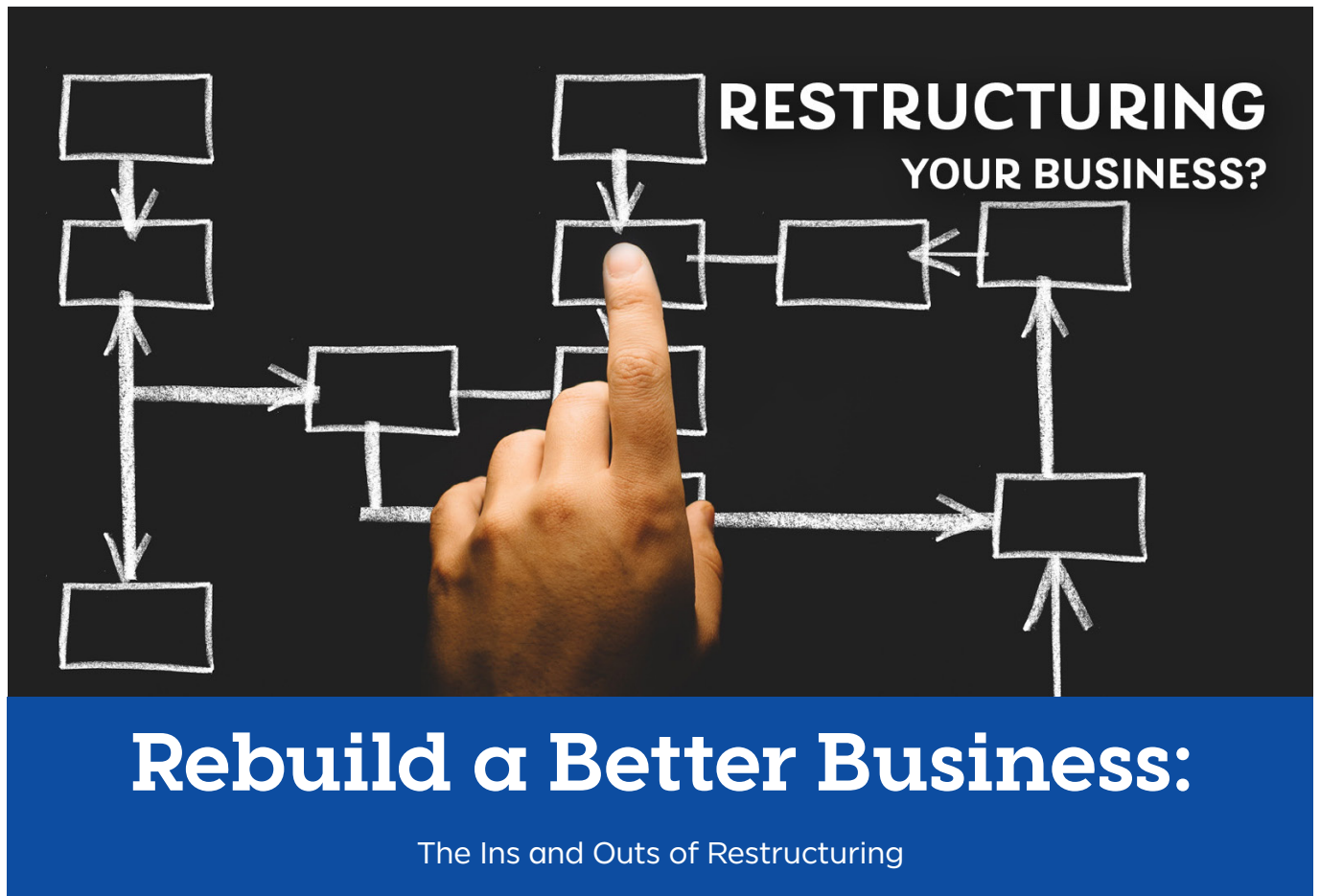
Story by Beth Caunter.



DebtManagers



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Rebuild a Better Business:

The Ins and Outs of Restructuring

As April ushers in the start of a new financial year, it's not uncommon for the goals of the year ahead - or the squeeze of a tighter budget - to trigger discussions of an internal shake-up. If a major structural change is on your radar, MyHR's HR Advisory Lead Tristan Mulgrew says there are a number of key factors to consider, both before you make a move and during the process.

"The purpose of a restructure is to effect a change in your organisation," she begins. "That may be change to people's positions, their hours, and the roles themselves, which could lead to redundancy."

Tristan notes that a significant shift-around may not always be due to a period of downturn; growth, too, can spell the need to re-organise how the business is set up. "(A restructure) is not always a bad outcome. Communicating to your team about where you are now and where you want to get to can be a positive thing, because it's giving people the opportunity to put their hands up if they want to go into those roles."

But before you get too comfortable with the positives, Tristan warns that a restructure may not actually be what your business needs. Often, she says, a business owner or leader will approach the MyHR team with an idea of what they want to change, but as they explore their ideal outcome, they discover a different path than they expected. As such, Tristan says that the first step isn't actually deciding on the restructure; rather, it's embarking on a process to discover whether a restructure will, in fact, yield the results you're looking for.

If, ultimately, you do land on a restructure as the correct course of action, Tristan advises that you back your decision with data - not a quiet desire to clean house.

"Maybe 10 to 15 years ago, it was okay to use a restructure as the

process to remove poor performers," she says. "Back then, you might hear: 'We need to downsize the headcount and we're going to pick on John.' But you can't do that anymore. You've got to be able to validate why you're taking that step."

Once a restructure is well and truly on the table, any discussions should center around positions and the organisation - never individuals - and why those positions are "no longer justified or tenable in your organisation." In other words, you need to do your homework, as well as prepare to present data-backed reasons for why certain changes should be made.

"The key is to be prepared," says Tristan. "If you're saying that volumes are down by 30% in the last quarter, you need data that reflects that. Make sure that whatever you're saying is true and can be validated."

Once you've decided that a restructure is the best solution, the next step is to consult with those employees whose roles would be affected. The question you're asking is not a yes-or-no question of whether they agree with the change, but a more comprehensive explanation of what you're looking to achieve.

"You're putting that business case to the employee or employees," says Tristan. "You're explaining: 'Here are the things that we need to change, and here's how we think we can affect that change.' If that's a change in positions, changed hours or anything that could change the individual terms and conditions that that person is employed on - that's a change for them."

She adds that at this stage, the rest of the business doesn't need to be privy to the same level of detail. "You don't need to go to the wider business if it's only one or two positions," she elaborates. "Your priority is to deal with those employees affected and to make sure that you're handling it in a way that you manage privacy

obligations in relation to their employment.”

Once you start the consultation process, Tristan advises to stick to the timelines – and if people are slow to provide their feedback, be proactive in reminding them of the deadline, so as not to cause undue delay. “You’re setting the rules,” she says. “You’re setting the timelines to communicate if there are changes.”

Embarking on a consultation process might seem like a pain, but the ramifications of doing so – or not doing so – can be significant. One of the positive outcomes can be that the affected employees suggest creative, innovative, and cost-saving alternate solutions you hadn’t thought of, allowing them to keep their jobs. But as for those who would rather not do their data homework or consult with the employees affected?

“Employees have the right to take a personal grievance,” says Tristan. “Particularly with the rise of AI use, we’ve seen a lot more people write personal grievances themselves [with the help of generative AI]. Regardless of how a person grievance arises, if the rationale for the redundancy isn’t validated or it doesn’t stack up, it could head through to mediation services, the employment authority, or the employment court – and you’re going to be found wanting.”

But what if your employees flat-out disagree with the restructure or provide impossible alternatives? “It’s about considering the feedback and providing validation,” says Tristan. “You just have to validate why you wouldn’t consider the alternatives that your employees putting in front of you. That’s why we’ve got to be careful with the language that we use. The first step is always a proposal, so that we’re not hinting at any predetermination or foregone conclusions of the process.”

Once the restructure itself is in progress, Tristan recommends

offering support to those affected, regardless of what their contract says. “The majority of New Zealand employment agreements will say that there’s no compensation due other than the notice period, but if you have an EAP support available for your employees, I would encourage its use throughout the consultation process. Talk to your provider to see if they do offer any outplacement services, because that’s something that you’re already paying for.”

Tristan points out that this may not eliminate the risk of a grievance or claim, “but you’re certainly showing that you’ve done everything you can within your realm to support this person.”

Wherever possible, she adds, consider payment in lieu of working their notice period. “If you’re saying, ‘I’ve got no work for you,’ make sure they know that they can go for interviews in that notice period. And don’t deduct that from their leave; just pay them to go. It’s doing everything you can within your realm to part on good terms.”

Some businesses have the HR capacity in house to see the entire process through from start to finish – including challenging assumptions that a restructure is the right move – but if that’s not the case for you, bringing in an outside consultant can help. Tristan gives a snapshot of the approach MyHR might take.

“We’ll ask up front: ‘What’s the justification here?’ We will push and test and try to plug gaps. Then we’ll turn that into the information you need to commence the process, which starts with the proposal. Then it’s gathering feedback from the individuals who are impacted, then determining what your outcome might be and what any final decision might look like.”

Special thanks to Tristan Mulgrew of MyHR. For more information, visit <https://www.myhr.works>. Story by Beth Caunter.

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The Sweet Taste of Success

Bon Accord's Path to Global Growth

Founder of Bon Accord, Paul L'Amie is passionate about exceeding customer expectations. So, when he recognised his company had an opportunity for exponential growth, without the system to achieve it, he reached out to Rob Morris for help.

Two years later, Bon Accord has fully embraced the Scaling Up framework. Revenue has scaled by more than 50%, profit has doubled, their team has expanded by a third, and they're planning a multi-million-dollar plant upgrade to keep pace with opportunities.

A highly successful, growing company producing premium, specialty beverages, the team at Bon Accord understand good taste - and thousands of customers across the globe agree. Founded by Paul L'Amie 22 years ago, Bon Accord is a great New Zealand export success story.

"We entered the market at a time when the café industry was just taking off. The arrival of the espresso machine bought a new level of sophistication to cafes, and this heralded quite an opportunity," he said. "I was lucky enough to recognise this right at the beginning and start building a range of beverage products as an alternative to coffee. We grasped hold of that emerging market, starting with drinking chocolate. Now we make and distribute 60 tonnes of drinking chocolate a

month."

Today, the company creates frappe and smoothie bases, real fruit pulps, syrups, hot and cold brews, iced tea and soft serves for many of the world's biggest café and dining chains. Bon

Accord's vision is to create a full beverage offer for cafés, taking their innovative products to the world. With continued expansion into the UAE, Australia and Japan, their customers are a roll call of global brands.

**"Rob has a wealth of experience - we certainly benefit from that. He has the expertise we need to navigate our growth into the new year and beyond."
- Roz Cattell**

Clarity Through Coaching

Two years ago, Paul realised, along with General Manager Roz Cattell, that Bon Accord needed external help to manage growth.

"We were growing quickly and had just brought on a major multinational customer. We could see there were areas to improve, but we also wanted to systemise our expansion," Paul explained.

Paul had heard about the potential of the Scaling Up framework, but knew realistically, he needed help to make it work. "There's a lot of information; I'm sure I could have read all the books, but I was never going to do that. We are just too busy. I wanted to get down to the essential elements.

“Over the years we’ve played at the edges but never committed to a proper business coaching engagement. But when Rob came along, we had a clear need, and he had the solution,” he said.

With Rob’s support and advice, Bon Accord has brought the Scaling Up framework to life and embarked on a bold export and expansion strategy.

The Goal: Global Expansion

Paul says the Scaling Up framework’s structure has been transformational for growth.

“Getting a framework in place, a structure to pin our growth onto, has been all-important and a big outcome of working with Rob.

“We’ve become focused on key areas to drive our bottom line, for example being clear on the type of customer we want here at Bon Accord - which is café chains.

“We’re no longer focused on the café down the road, but the whole chain. With contact through head office, we get a great deal of leverage. We’ve spoken to one chain that has 3,500 outlets. In fact, we are currently at a point where we simply cannot take on any more customers.

“And we’re expensive. We are not a cheap option, but we’re a very high-quality option. Chains that want a product range to draw people back in the door... that’s where we fit. A lot of these chains are looking to differentiate themselves and that’s a very strong opportunity for us, an exciting market. Working with Rob has helped us get really clear about our core customer, and that’s showing up in our bottom line.

“Now we are looking at expansion of our manufacturing processes and systems, perhaps even a shift to another building, to cope with the amount of business in the pipeline.”

In fact, Bon Accord’s commitment to the Scaling Up framework has enabled Paul and Roz to expand their team by a third in just two months.

Scaling the ‘Rocks’

The first big change Roz noticed to business outcomes after bringing Rob on board was the accountability of the Scaling Up ‘Rocks’ - the quarterly priorities that drive growth.

“The rocks are, literally, absolute gems. I think we’ve achieved them all. The rocks are essential to our business now.

“For high functioning professionals like us... we’ve got stuff in our heads, we know what we’ve got to do. But when you get it on paper with your management team, your leadership team, everybody gets on the same page. That’s what Rob helped us do,” Roz said.

“You get buy-in and alignment and there’s no surprises. We commit to a goal. Scaling Up is about being accountable together,” Roz explained.

Silos to Synergy

“Before Rob came on board, we were all in our little silos. We knew what we had to do, but there wasn’t a lot of structure. What Rob does is get it all out, get it down on paper; what’s important to each department, and what’s important to the business. Our walls are covered with notes from sessions with Rob,” said Roz.

“It’s a very trusting relationship, which is good, because we have open feedback. I’m very happy for Rob to challenge me on my thinking. He knows he can do that and he does it freely.”
- Paul L’Amie

“When you start getting into the ‘nitty gritty’ of the issues we’re facing, for people to be unreserved in discussions, it’s very, very important,” Paul explained.

“Rob puts everyone at ease. He’s able to draw things out of people, which is a great skill. Everyone can share without any recriminations or concern.”

Going Forward - Together

Roz says that Rob is very clear on his message, guiding teams on where they want to be and how they are going to get there.

“He’ll break it down into five-year, three-year, two-year, one year, quarter by quarter, month by month. And you need that framework, and boundaries, when you are growing at this rate.”

Rob tailors the sessions to the needs of the team, and they appreciate that he makes himself available in between, too.

“In our focus on the chains and building business, I’ve leaned on Rob a lot in discussion around that strategy, the impact and how we manage it going forward,” said Paul.

“I’ve proposed we need another factory, and he has challenged me on that. We’ve got a lot more discussion to come. Thanks to Rob’s CFO background and various other roles, he’s had exposure to every part of business, and he knows where we need to find focus.”

2026 and Beyond

Bon Accord’s export success has been extraordinary, and there are still boundless opportunities.

“We’re in Australia, the Middle East, Japan, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands - five destinations, four of which are export.



“We are very positive about the coming year. In our business, it’s all about high value, expensive plant. We have the best and most stringent food safety certifications in the world. So, any changes need careful preparation,” says Paul.

Having spent the last several months filling the pipeline, especially from the Middle East, Roz is fully focussed on this preparation.

“We’ve had a lot of plant changes recently. My goal is to get the plant up and running at maximum capacity, because we’ve got business to do, but we need to be able to deliver. We’ve got the potential for growth; we’ve got the pipeline. Now we’re saying, let’s get the plant, let’s get the people in place and make sure we are absolutely solid. It’s pretty exciting.”

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Member Profiles

We profile **Members** of the Rosebank Business Association

Safety 'n Action: Supporting Safer Workplaces Across West Auckland and Beyond

Safety 'n Action is one of New Zealand's largest providers of workplace health and safety training, supporting businesses to build safer, more capable teams across a wide range of industries. From construction and manufacturing to logistics, utilities, and local government, the organisation works with employers throughout West Auckland and across the country to deliver practical training that supports both compliance and safer worksites.

With a long history of delivering training in the region, Safety 'n Action has recently invested in a dedicated West Auckland training centre, making it easier for local businesses and workers to access essential safety and transport training close to home.

Its programmes cover a broad range of health and safety skills, including first aid, working at heights, confined space entry, hazardous substances, and mobile plant operation, to name a few.

Behind the training is a team of experienced instructors and support staff, many of whom have spent years working in the industries they now train. This practical background helps ensure the training remains grounded in the real challenges people face on worksites every day.

Safety 'n Action is part of the Aspire2 Group, an education organisation delivering training and career pathways across New

Zealand and internationally. Through this wider network, the organisation continues to support workplaces with practical training that helps people build skills and stay safe on the job.

The organisation works closely with local businesses, industry groups, and communities to help ensure workers go home safe. Its approach centres on practical learning, clear guidance, and supporting organisations to build stronger safety cultures within their teams. At its core, the team believes that effective safety training should be practical, engaging, and focused on building stronger safety habits in the workplace.

Please contact Gary Lewis, our West Auckland relationship manager, to discuss how we can support your health and safety training needs. Email Gary at gary.lewis@safetynaction.co.nz or call 021 221 0935.



Safety 'n Action

Phone: 0800 222 388

Contact Email: gary.lewis@safetynaction.co.nz

Website: <https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/>

Entec Services Limited

Entec Services Limited is a New Zealand-owned industrial services company with a history spanning more than four decades. Founded in 1982 by David Weston, its early years were focused primarily on supplying and servicing gas engines for power generation, including projects in cogeneration and LPG-powered locomotives.

From these foundations, Entec has evolved into a diversified engineering and technical services provider. Today, the company employs approximately 130 staff across multiple locations, including New Plymouth, Auckland and Taupō. Its core operations now span instrumentation and electrical (I&E) services, gas detection systems, and mechanical equipment support. The company specialises in hazardous area environments, offering design, installation, commissioning, maintenance, and calibration services, as well as supplying industrial equipment and turnkey solutions to clients across sectors such as energy, utilities, food processing, and manufacturing.

A key turning point came in 2010, when Entec acquired an instrumentation, electrical, and gas detection business, significantly expanding its technical capability and workforce. This diversification has underpinned sustained growth, alongside the development of in-house manufacturing through its TCE Controls division and the introduction of prefabricated plant rooms.

Entec has delivered a range of notable and technically interesting projects over its history. These include landfill gas power generation installations, the design and construction of the Horotiu landfill gas power station, and more recently, the production and export of a 45-tonne prefabricated switch room to Australia. The company is also increasingly involved in emerging energy initiatives, such as EV charging infrastructure, solar generation, and green hydrogen systems.

Today, Entec is positioned as a specialist provider supporting New Zealand's industrial and energy sectors, combining long-standing expertise with a growing focus on future energy technologies.



Entec Services Limited

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Charlton Cowley
Abbott Insurance Brokers

Risk Mitigation: Building Resilience Into Your Business Plan

For many business owners, planning tends to focus on growth: new clients, new hires, and new opportunities. But the most resilient businesses are the ones that plan just as carefully for what might go wrong.

Risk mitigation isn't about being pessimistic. It's about being prepared.

Whether it's a cyber event, supply chain disruption, natural hazard, or something as simple – but disruptive – as a break-in, the question is the same: how quickly could your business recover?

Strong businesses don't leave that to chance. They build risk awareness into their planning, so when something does happen, it's an anticipated interruption, not a complete disaster.

Start with a practical risk lens

You don't need a complex framework to get started. A simple approach is to regularly ask:

- What are the biggest risks to our operations right now?
- What would stop us from trading tomorrow?
- How long could we operate if that happened?
- What physical, procedural, and financial protections do we have in place?

From there, risk mitigation becomes a combination of:

- Prevention: reducing the likelihood of an event
- Protection: minimising the impact of an event
- Recovery planning: getting back up and running as quickly as possible.

One of the most common, and often underestimated, risks for SMEs is burglary and theft.

Burglary and theft: small gaps, big impacts

A break-in doesn't just mean stolen goods. It can also mean damaged premises, interrupted trading, lost revenue, and pressure on your staff and customers.

The good news is, many incidents are preventable with relatively simple measures.

Here are some practical steps to reduce your exposure:

1. Make your premises a harder target

Visible deterrents matter. Alarm systems, monitored CCTV, and well-lit entry points can significantly reduce the likelihood of opportunistic crime.

2. Control access points

Review locks, doors, and windows regularly. Reinforce weak points and ensure that keys, swipe cards, or codes are tightly managed, especially when staff leave the business.

3. Be smart about stock and equipment

Keep high-value items out of sight where possible. Secure tools, laptops, and portable equipment after hours. If it's easy to grab, it's easy to lose.

4. Strengthen internal processes

Theft isn't always external. Clear procedures around cash-handling, stock control, and reconciliations help reduce internal risk.

5. Create routine and visibility

Regular opening/closing checks, varied routines, and visible staff presence can deter repeat targeting.

6. Think beyond the theft itself

Consider the downstream impact. Could you consider trading if key equipment was stolen? How quickly could you replace it?

This is where many businesses discover the gap between what they think they're covered for and what their insurance would actually respond to.

Protection is only part of the picture

Insurance plays a critical role in risk mitigation, but only if it's structured correctly.

It's not about simply replacing the stolen items, it's about:

- covering damage to premises,
- protecting against business interruption,
- ensuring claims are settled quickly and appropriately; and
- supporting you to get back to business, not just back to square one.

And, importantly, ensuring your sums insured, policy structure, and endorsements reflect how your business actually operates today, not how it looked a few years ago.

A simple next step

If it's been a while since you've reviewed your insurance, or if your business has changed, it's worth taking a fresh look.

An obligation-free insurance review with an Abbott insurance broker can help identify gaps, clarify what's covered, and ensure your programme is aligned to your current risks and future plans.

Because when the unexpected happens, the real measure of resilience isn't avoiding disruption altogether; it's how quickly and confidently you can recover.

Contact Senior Insurance Broker Charlton Cowley to arrange your complimentary insurance review.

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Bethany Sweeney
Smith & Partners

What Is The Purpose Of An Indemnity Clause?

Businesses face risk every day, from defective products to regulatory investigations and third-party claims. One of the most common contractual tools used to manage that risk is an indemnity clause. Although the term sounds technical, indemnities play a central role in allocating responsibility between commercial parties before problems arise.

Put simply, an indemnity is a promise by one party to compensate the other if specified events occur. It is usually included as a clause in a contract and operates by shifting financial risk from one party to another. A familiar example is insurance, which is itself a form of indemnity. In a commercial context, a retailer may require a supplier to indemnify it against claims arising from faulty goods. If customers demand refunds, replacements, or bring claims, the supplier must reimburse the retailer for those losses.

From a business perspective, an indemnity provides protection against liabilities that might otherwise sit with the business. From the indemnifier's perspective, it is an agreement to make good the loss suffered by the other party if the agreed risk materialises. These twin ideas of protection and compensation underpin how indemnities operate in practice.

Indemnity clauses are particularly valuable because they often go further than an ordinary claim for damages. Normally, a party claiming damages must prove that the contract was breached, that the breach caused the loss, and that reasonable steps were

taken to mitigate that loss. Those hurdles can be difficult and expensive to overcome. By contrast, a well-drafted indemnity may apply without proof of fault, breach, causation, or mitigation, requiring only that a defined loss has occurred. Indemnities may also apply even where a loss was not foreseeable, and they frequently extend to losses caused by third parties or by regulatory action.

While indemnities can arise by implication or through conduct, relying on an unwritten or verbal indemnity is risky. The absence of clear wording creates uncertainty and makes enforcement difficult. Although courts will occasionally find that an obligation to indemnify exists based on the parties' conduct, this is uncommon and should not be relied on in commercial arrangements.

Care is also required because indemnity clauses are interpreted strictly. If the wording is unclear or imprecise, a court may give the clause a meaning very different from what the parties intended. Courts are generally reluctant to enforce indemnities for losses caused by the indemnified party's own negligence, for indirect or consequential losses such as lost profits or reputation, or for losses caused by third parties, unless the clause clearly says so. On the other hand, if the clause is drafted too broadly, the indemnifier may be exposed to liabilities well beyond what was anticipated.

For that reason, effective indemnity clauses clearly define the triggering events, the types of loss covered, and any exclusions or caps on liability. They should also be carefully aligned with other contractual provisions, such as limitation of liability clauses and insurance obligations, to ensure the overall risk allocation works as intended.

Indemnities are commonly used where parties want to allocate risk in advance, where one party is more exposed to third party claims, or where one party is better placed to control or insure against the risk. Typical examples include construction contracts, supply agreements, event arrangements, and intellectual property licences. Because indemnities can have significant financial consequences, they are often heavily negotiated and should be approached with care. Obtaining legal advice before agreeing to an indemnity can help ensure the clause reflects the commercial deal and avoids unintended exposure.

In the first instance, talk to the specialist commercial lawyers at Smith and Partners. Contact Bethany Sweeney by email at bethany.sweeney@smithpartners.co.nz or call 837 6831.



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Scaling Past \$20m: The Three Things That Break Before You Notice

Most New Zealand businesses that reach \$20m have got there the same way: a founder with deep domain knowledge, a small leadership team that punches above its weight, and an organisational model built around a handful of capable people.

Rob Morris
RGM Consulting

That model works. Until it doesn't.

As companies push through \$20m toward \$50m and beyond, the question stops being: "How do we grow?" and becomes something more fundamental: "Do we actually have a business that can scale - and one that is building a sustainable valuation in the process?"

In my experience working with leadership teams across technology, manufacturing and construction, three things tend to break at this stage. They're predictable. They're also surprisingly easy to miss until they've already done damage.

The leadership team looks aligned - but isn't

At \$10m, alignment happens informally. The team is small, communication is constant, and everyone instinctively knows what matters.

At \$20-\$30m, that stops working, often without anyone noticing until the damage is done. Priorities get interpreted differently across functions. Meetings multiply, but decisions slow. Sales, operations, and finance are all working hard, but not always toward the same thing.

The problem isn't capability. It's that alignment at this stage has to be built deliberately - it no longer emerges naturally from proximity. And misalignment at the top doesn't stay at the top; it introduces friction throughout the organisation, erodes performance, and quietly limits the value of what you're building.

Execution becomes unpredictable

Companies at this stage can almost always deliver under pressure. A critical deadline, a major client issue - teams pull together and get it done.

What breaks is the in-between. Too many priorities. Things started

but not finished. Accountability that's assumed rather than explicit. This shows up particularly for companies in the \$30m-\$50m range. They're big enough to have a lot on the go but haven't yet nailed systematic execution. In manufacturing and technology businesses, it often manifests as strong technical capability sitting alongside inconsistent delivery; the business can do the work, but not always reliably.

Inconsistent execution doesn't just slow growth. It creates performance volatility that makes the business harder to manage, harder to scale, and ultimately worth less than it should be.

The founder is still holding it together

This is the most common constraint, and often the last one founders want to acknowledge.

Even at \$50m-\$100m, many businesses are still running on the founder's judgment, relationships, and decision-making. It works, in the sense that things keep moving. But look more carefully and you'll find decisions that should have been delegated still funneling upward and key commercial relationships sitting with individuals, rather than the organisation.

In construction and technology businesses particularly, it's common to find a founder still anchoring client relationships, product direction, and senior hiring, even as the team around them has grown substantially.

A business that depends on individuals carries risk. It's harder to scale, harder to sustain, and worth materially less than a business that can stand on its own.

The shift required is from a business that runs on individuals to one that runs on structure, clear roles, and processes that don't depend on who's in the room.

Growth is not enough

The companies that scale well through this stage share a common discipline: they align their leadership teams deliberately, build a consistent operating rhythm, and reduce dependence on any one individual.

None of that means adding bureaucracy. It means building an organisation with the clarity and structure to perform consistently as complexity increases.

Beyond \$20m, the businesses that scale well are rarely the ones that pushed hardest for growth. They're the ones that built an organisation capable of handling it.

Rob Morris, RGM Consulting, rob@rgmconsulting.co.nz



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Alan McDonald
EMA Head of Advocacy

New Zealand's Employment Dispute System Needs Reform

New Zealand has long taken pride in a dispute resolution system designed to be practical, accessible and fair.

In 1894, we introduced the world's first system of compulsory conciliation and arbitration to resolve industrial disputes, aiming to reduce strikes and promote negotiated outcomes. It was a foundation that continues to influence today's employment dispute resolution system.

In principle, this system should allow disputes to be resolved quickly and constructively. But increasingly, employers are telling us the system is not working as intended.

The Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) recently surveyed our members about their experiences navigating employment disputes. Many of them told us that the process is becoming slower, more expensive, and more adversarial.

Mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration, and specialist tribunals aim to settle disputes faster and at lower cost than traditional litigation. In employment matters, mediation is meant to be the cornerstone of that system.

This should encourage constructive dialogue and pragmatic outcomes. However, many employers report that the process is being shaped by external representatives whose incentives may not always align with early resolution.

A growing concern is the role of unregulated employment advocates, some of whom were described as "cowboys" and "ambulance chasers" in our recent survey.

Unlike lawyers, who must adhere to strict professional standards set by the New Zealand Law Society, employment advocates operate with little formal oversight. Anyone can describe themselves as an advocate, set their own fee structures, and represent parties in mediation or before the Employment Relations Authority.

Many advocates provide valuable support to employees who might otherwise struggle to navigate the system. But the absence of consistent professional standards leaves the door open for poor practice.

Our members report encountering advocates who adopt unnecessarily aggressive approaches, escalate disputes prematurely, or submit lengthy correspondence that complicates rather than clarifies the issues. Some employers describe situations where the cost of defending a claim quickly exceeds the value of the claim itself.

In those circumstances, even businesses that believe they have acted lawfully can feel pressured to settle early, simply to avoid the mounting cost and time involved in continuing the process.

The rise of "no-win, no-fee" representation is another factor shaping the landscape.

These arrangements can play an important role in improving access to justice. Employees who have lost their income following a dismissal or dispute may not be able to afford hourly legal fees. These contingent fee arrangements can make representation possible when it otherwise wouldn't be.

But they can also create incentives that encourage disputes to escalate rather than resolve. When representatives are paid a percentage of the final settlement, there can be pressure to maximise payouts or prolong negotiations. Employers increasingly report situations where the advocate's fee becomes a key part of the settlement discussion.

Another emerging trend is the use of AI-generated correspondence in disputes. Employers have told us about receiving long, complex letters that contain inaccuracies or misleading interpretations of events. Instead of clarifying matters, this can increase confusion, delay progress, and inflate expectations.

Taken together, these developments are placing the dispute resolution system under strain. The EMA's employment relations AdviceLine and our legal team regularly hear the frustrations that this system is causing our members, and they often guide members through disputes that have become unnecessarily complex.

The consequences are not limited to employers. Employees also suffer when disputes drag on for months, making it harder for people to move on with their careers.

What is needed now is targeted reform to restore trust and confidence in the system.

The EMA has passed along our survey feedback to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, which administers and supports the dispute resolution system.

Along with a number of business and legal organisations, we are urging the government to review the disputes process and introduce appropriate regulation of employment advocates.

Regulation would not prevent advocates from representing employees or operating on flexible fee models, but it would ensure anyone offering these services meets minimum competency and ethical requirements.

Overall, we need a dispute resolution process that is fit for purpose, so that mediation remains focused on early, constructive resolution.

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