

# Helping firms reach their potential

■ BY BARBARA WEIL

Established in 1988, Advantage Business is one of the country's largest independent 100 per cent New Zealand owned non-franchise advisory groups, serving large corporates, medium and smaller businesses. It has offices in Albany, Wellington, Hamilton, Rotorua, Tauranga and Napier and plans to eventually cover the country.

"Our services cover projects to resolve specific issues and longer term programmes to promote business growth and profitability," said business adviser Bruce Taylor. "Services are flexible and tailored to each client's requirements."

With what Mr Taylor described as a "practical integrated approach", Advantage Business examines financial performance, marketing, sales management, staff operations and systems, strategy and planning and management and leadership.

"In a world that keeps changing at an ever increasing rate we work with all types of businesses to create and maintain competitive advantage, growth management, service delivery and even help undertake exit strategy planning," Mr Taylor explained.

He said the company's business advisors each have a minimum of 20 years' hands-on management or business ownership experience.

Mr Taylor himself began in business advice in the late 1980s after he sold a computer company and began giving assistance to others in business.

"I don't need a fancy title – business adviser suits me very well. My pleasure is gained from seeing businesses achieve their full potential, doing what they set out to do, sometimes unaware of the pitfalls and ins and outs."

Mr Taylor has been working with Jamie Miller of Newmarket's Mint Kitchen catering company (featured in this issue of *Business to Business*) for the past three years.

"Jamie is an excellent technician, but GST, tax, OSH requirements and other issues worried him and he found decision-making difficult. After all you don't want officials from the IRD or others knocking on your door because you have failed to keep up the paperwork. Compliance issues can be confusing and a damn nuisance. We try to impart the best possible knowledge"

Advantage Business has strategic partners with other organisations such as the New Zealand Retailers' Association. "We are also patrons of the business mentor scheme. We provide volunteer services – our way of giving something back," Mr Taylor said.

What also makes Advantage Business unique is that it gives potential clients a complimentary assessment. "We look at their goals, give an overview



■ Advantage Business adviser Bruce Taylor (left) works with a client.

of strengths and weaknesses, future issues and long term ambitions," Mr Taylor said.

Advantage Business is not for businesses in trouble. "Some people reach a plateau, not knowing the next step – that's where we come in."

With bigger businesses the company may need help with production, products and sometimes big new projects. "We have 20 in our team – all with very specific skills.

In addition to the Advantage Business initial free assessment, a guarantee is available. "If, for any reason, a new client is not satisfied with our service performance within the first 30 days of appointment, we will refund the initial payment in full," Taylor said.

"The process of engaging a new client is carried out thoroughly in a step-by-step manner. We show the potential client that the process is practical and logical."

"I felt that the analyst got right into my current issues and equally importantly understood what I wanted to achieve," said one satisfied client.

"Bruce Taylor really helped us make the hard decisions. I'm conservative by nature, so that was a real boost," said Jamie Miller from Mint Kitchen.

Mr Taylor said a successful business can be defined as one that produces a "very" acceptable return on the assets employed and which keeps on running without necessarily depending on the owner to be in daily attendance.

"Advantage Business enabled us to go on a family holiday for the first time in three years," said another happy client.

"Successful businesses will attract a buyers' premium if put on the market," Mr Taylor said. "On the other hand the business is also great to continue because it produces returns that are hard to beat elsewhere and it gives freedom and lifestyle choices."