



ANDREW COY

Andrew is one of the founders and the chief executive of Wellington-based Magritek, an advanced technology company specialising in nuclear magnetic resonance systems. With a PhD in physics, Andrew brings together science and business, guiding one of New Zealand's leading high-tech companies to success on the international market.

1. In the context of your professional background, what does 'talent' mean to you?

Talent in my background means people who can make hard things appear easy to do. To make things look easy generally requires a huge amount of time invested in one's life practising, experiencing and doing the thing that you become really good at. That in turn means people who really enjoy what they do. Talent is not just about science or maths or technology; it is in the arts, humanities and all areas of life. Sometimes, talent is people with PhDs; sometimes it is people who seem to be able to mind-read and know exactly what people want, or people who do other amazing things. That is the key thing for me – talented people who just do the most impossible things and make it look as though it was the easiest thing in the world.

2. Are you aware of any talent gaps that exist or might arise within the next ten years?

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organisations that operate on the global stage and are able to successfully be part of it. Unfortunately, most organisations in New Zealand don't have a huge amount of experience doing that.

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Our heritage is very much around primary industry and agriculture. If we are going to have world-class companies that manufacture and export, we need people who have that particular talent and experience. The really crazy thing is that many of those talented people overseas are Kiwis who are part of our one-million-strong diaspora who have

ended up as talent working in organisations in other countries. We desperately want to attract those people back to work in our exciting high-tech businesses. We have an incredible world-class education system, but the experience of being in a globally successful company is something that you only become very good at by being there. It is a catch 22, but I think we can untie the knot because we can attract those talented people back to New Zealand and they will make a difference.

3. How do successful organisations attract, keep and grow talent?

The thing about talent is, it is not that they are just after jobs that are high paying; it is that they want to be challenged in a really special way. They want to be part of something that has an impact on the world. For me, talented people want to do things that everybody else thinks is impossible. If you're trying to run a business that is trying to export to the world, create products that have never been created before, go up and compete with companies that no one ever thought you could compete with and change the market and change

the world, then the single most important thing for your success is having talented people in your business. That is the number one success factor. A talented team of people will always find a way to succeed because succeeding is just built into their DNA, it's in their nature, and it's what they have to do. They have to make hard things easy.

4. Think about talent hubs around the world, what is cool and why?

Talent hubs are not a consequence of having a whole lot of businesses with talented people there. Talent does attract talent, and talent wants to live in places where it is exciting, where they are challenged and stimulated in many different ways. It can be about being in a stunning environment, talent hubs are places where the arts and music are sensational, and the food and entertainment are world class. In talent hubs there are museums, theatres, sports, recreation, diversity and culture, vibrancy – all of that attracts talent. And then those talented people working in organisations in that hub make those organisations successful, and that success attracts other talent and those successful organisations further fuel the arts, theatre, sports and all the stuff that goes on in the hub, which in turn makes it an attractive place to live and bring up kids. And then they stay there.

5. Can you assess New Zealand's performance in attracting talent on a global scale?

The fact that we have a million of us who live overseas isn't a particularly good scorecard. A lot of those million New Zealanders who live overseas are a disproportionate higher percentage of our talent, which is not good in the long term. We have this one big natural

advantage, this absolutely fantastic natural environment in New Zealand, but that seems to be the main thing that we hang on to. We under-invest in arts, diversity and culture; and even in the environment and all the other things that will attract people back. New Zealand is still a fantastic place to live. But when you sit down and think how good it could be, all the different things we could do to actually attract our talented people to come live here or attract other countries' talented people, that is when you start to think we could just do so much more.

6. What does New Zealand need to do in order to attract, keep and grow talent?

Everything about the lifestyle impacts on people's choice about where they want to live. We need more successful, exciting, challenging companies that people want to come and work for because they will not get the opportunity to work for a company like that anywhere else in the world. We need to make our environment better and more attractive so people see living here as more of a privilege, not just a lucky accident.

We need to invest more in the arts, music, theatre, drama and films. We have amazing arts, music and film here. We have this 'tall poppy syndrome' where it is not good to brag about how good we are at things. But forget that. Let's get up on the world stage and let people know just how incredibly good we are.

First of all, we actually have to invest, make it happen and genuinely support all of those things that make living here attractive. But then, let's get up and tell the world about it and make people desperate to come and live here, queuing up and lining up to work here. And then you'll start to get more successful and exciting companies and you'll start to

get the once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that talented people just have to be a part of.

7. Any final thoughts for young people?

It's great being young – you can take risks, try everything. The most important thing is to find out who you are and what you really love and where your passion is. It does not matter what it is – just pursue it relentlessly, practise it, experience it and become the best in the world at those things that you love doing. Ignore everyone who says that you can't do it – feel completely scared and freaked out about it and do it anyway. For me, young people live in an incredible age where, if you grow up in New Zealand, you can pretty well, do, be, learn, know or experience anything you want to. All you have to do is find the thing that you really love and go do it. Make an impact on the world. Make an impact on the thing that you love doing. Change it, set your sights on something that is so high it seems impossible, then go and do it anyway. The one lesson I've learnt is the day you decide to do it and start ignoring all those people who say you can't, ironically, is the first day you start achieving it. So get on with it, find out what it is that you love and go do it.

Interviewed by Darren Zhang via Skype, on 5 September 2013. Photograph provided by Magritek.