

Celebrating talent helps make more

MANY of us have heard of the late Sir Paul Callahan. His passion and conviction for the role of science in the future of our country was compelling and tangible. In his later years he spoke about New Zealand needing to be a place "where talent wants to live" if we were to have a prosperous future. Initially, to me this was a bit esoteric, until I met Wendy McGuinness, founder of the McGuinness Institute, who has built a forum, TalentNZ, to move his ideas forward. What she is doing is taking TalentNZ to cities and regions and asking: "How do you make your city a place where talent wants to live?"

What she believes is that most cities have wonderful people doing wonderful things. What we need to do to prosper is concentrate on attracting more of those talented people to our city, rather than trying to back winning industries or companies. In thinking about this, I have chosen three diverse local "talents" whom I believe exemplify this concept. Those selected are the sort of people we need to attract to make Dunedin a place where people want to live.

My first "talent" is Ian Taylor, founder of Animation Research. I have never met Mr Taylor but I follow his successes with interest. A few years ago we were in the midst of the global financial crisis. Many local businesses were in great difficulty and Mr Taylor spoke about his business struggles to the *ODT*. He was ready to walk away when he heard of the closure of the Dunedin Fisher and Paykel factory but his belief in business in Dunedin changed his mind... he chose to fight on.

At that time, I personally was involved in another business (not AbacusBio) that was struggling. It can be lonely in business when things are not going well and I remember reading his comments in the paper and as a result, myself feeling more able to fight.

Business growth, like life, is very rarely linear and in a society which condemns failure and slashes tall poppies, standing out in success or failure can be an enormous challenge. When people are brave enough to speak about their struggles, it makes their successes so much more wonderful.

My second "talent" is Helen Darling, whom I have worked with professionally and who has also become a personal friend. Where Dr Darling stands out is in her commitment to her cause: food integrity at a global level. Like many successful people, she sees people who put blocks in her path as people to "work around" and she always finds a way through when the chips are down. She is also incredibly willing to share her knowledge and assist in developing paths for others.

To this end, she has run several workshops for Dunedin businesswomen and last year she financially backed bringing an international food integrity conference to our city. She is brave, she takes risks and rides the highs and lows of business ups and downs, but more than anything, she gives back: she is a



talent who attracts and builds other talent.

My third and final "talent" is a little more left-field, someone who has made a big impact on the sporting world rather than the business world: Billy Ibadulla. Mr Ibadulla is a long-serving technical cricket coach who has coached cricket greats including Glenn Turner and Ken Rutherford. He also coached my brothers and now coaches my sons and what I have noticed are the intangible values he passes on to every boy he coaches. Mr Ibadulla's dedication and commitment becomes a "model of behaviour" for those who work with him. Boys do not go to Mr Ibadulla to muck around; they go to learn and they go to work hard.

A mother said to me that her son's school teacher told her that her boy's concentration in class had improved since he had been getting trained by Mr Ibadulla. In a world of electronics and constant stimulation, boys learn commitment, work ethic and of course world-class technical cricket skills. Yes, Mr Ibadulla has brought us many fine cricketers, but I believe he has added different sorts of values to many young men which they will carry with them throughout their lives.

To thrive, Dunedin needs talent and we need to celebrate and grow that talent to attract more. It is not someone's qualifications which set them apart; rather it is their attitude, their commitment and their willingness to share. For Dunedin and New Zealand to have a prosperous future, we all need to ask: "Are we doing enough to retain and attract new talent?"

In the words of Sir Paul Callahan: "We simply push on, ignore the pessimism, and lead by example. Then suddenly we find ourselves surrounded by success and telling ourselves that it was always meant to be this way."

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