

## **Local charity turns visual planning tools into social enterprise**

Local organisation, Interactionz, has been very excited recently about their transformation from charity to social enterprise.

Interactionz provides visualisation (or visual planning) tools that can be used to help make people's lives and businesses better. By becoming a social enterprise, Interactionz can offer the benefits of these services to businesses, which then helps fund making these services available to those individuals in the community who need mentoring, or just some direction, because of life circumstances.

As a charity, Interactionz has been supporting people in the community for over 50 years, providing a community mentoring service, as well as subsidised training. The training also provides a positive social impact – by building capability within other community organisations through teaching them to support people in the community more effectively.

For about a decade now, Interactionz has been using visualisation tools, called PATH and MAPS. These tools have been helping people with disabilities to visualise their goals, with the use of large colourful graphics, and talented facilitators to pull their ideas and goals together, and identify practical steps to achieve them. When used in conjunction with their mentoring service, this has allowed people with disabilities to live the lives they want to live, rather than perhaps lives designed by other people.

Janelle Fisher, Interactionz' Community Psychologist says that these visual planning tools were so effective that they realised they could be used to benefit a much wider range of people and businesses.

“The process of visualising a plan or direction, be it an individual's desire for a more fulfilling life, or a high level strategic business plan, is essentially the same. It involves using visual recorders to 'graph' your future in colourful hand-drawn images, and a process facilitator to guide you with questions to catalyse your thinking as you create your plan. The robust and proven processes foster collaboration, productive dialogue and make sure that everyone is engaged and on the same page, and most importantly, agreed on the specific direction they are taking” says Janelle.

Having undergone significant changes over its history, in both name and structure (including being known as the Waikato branch of the Disabled Citizens' Society in 1967, and then later as the Hamilton Sheltered Workshops and Training Centre), Interactionz' journey has always been led by its vision of making the community a better place for everyone to live and thrive. This change to social enterprise was no different, and was prompted by the success of the tools they have used as part of the individual mentoring process.

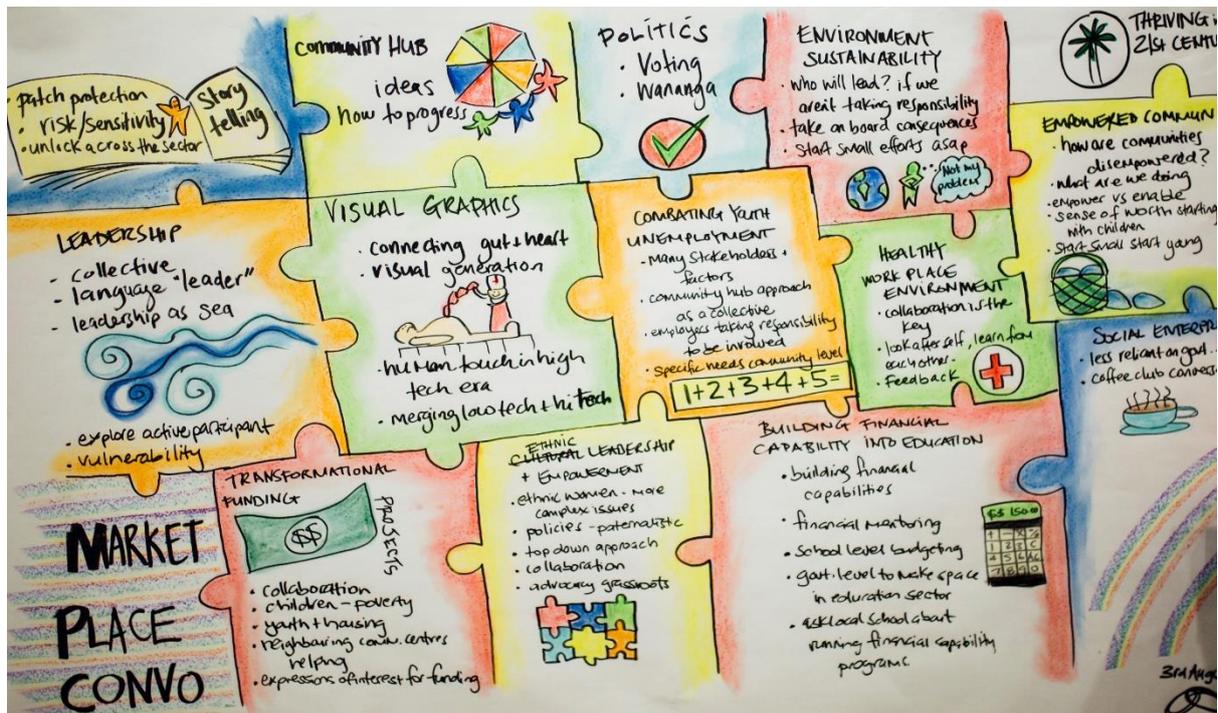
Interactionz realised that by launching this service to businesses, they could use the profits to help fund their mentoring service for individuals.

Lynda Millington, Interactionz' Chief Executive says that the potential of where and how visual facilitation tools can be used effectively in a business is huge.

“Be it team performance improvement for businesses needing to increase efficiency and productivity, planning and visioning for schools, audiences with limited language skills, or strategic and operational planning for organisations needing to clarify vision and direction. Alternatively, our visual recording service can be used to just give a visual record of meetings, workshops or conferences. These tools can be picked up and used effectively anywhere. Since we launched as a social enterprise, we have successfully worked with businesses in all of these situations, in industries as diverse as engineering and tourism. The feedback has been fantastic” says Lynda.

The new Interactionz offices at 113C Ruakura Lane, Ruakura Campus have recently opened. As in any new office, there has been the hustle and bustle of getting everything set up, especially as there were two planning sessions facilitated on their first day in their new space. Interactionz have created their own visual facilitation plan, so they know exactly where this social enterprise journey is taking them.

Visit <http://interactionz.org.nz>



Caption: Graphics captured by Interactionz at the Community Waikato Conference – Thriving in the 21st Century