

Lisa Bond

Sub 1

From: Greg Day [greg.day@getstaffed.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2008 8:43 a.m.
To: Submission@DigitalStrategy.govt.nz
Subject: my thoughts

Hi

I have read the digital strategy draft document with I admit some despair. There are some good points, around connection particularly, but the document as a whole appears to be defeatist rather than positive, and looking backwards rather than forwards. The overall theme seems to be to continue New Zealand's "fast adopter" strategy. Which means, frankly, in the IT world, the person left behind.

Nowhere in the document is anything to do with innovation mentioned. Nowhere is supporting innovators, who generally might start in their bedroom. Its easy to get funding once you are earning millions, this is what NZTE do all the time. But to get help when you are a school kid in your garage hacking something is impossible.

New Zealand needs to be innovating, because of our size and distance, we need innovation on a level that exceeds other countries. We need to ensure that kids hacking in a garage know that there is someone they can show things to, someone who understands, can get them in touch with funding, start explaining marketing. This is the innovation we need. Innovation in NZ in the digital age is not going to come from established companies in general. This is not how the Internet age works.

I can jump on any internet connected computer, and within an hour download a full, world class development suite for free, and start creating. I can create a world class website in my bedroom, running on amazon servers and databases. How does the government assist? It might think about assisting me when I have proved I can export, and sell. Basically when I have proved I don't really need any assistance. We need to be taking chances. Looking for possibility, not proof.

We need to stop with the thinking that innovation is going to come from overseas, and that NZ needs to constrain itself to select "niches". It doesn't. There is nothing that NZ cannot achieve in the IT sphere, assuming sufficient infrastructure is in place (which in this day and age simply means fast broadband). There is no sector that kiwis cannot excel. We do not need to wait for the rest of the world to create, and then follow like sheep. We need to create, we need others to come to us because we are the innovators.

I realise that NZ's primary industries are the backbone (currently) of our economy. However, to look forward, we need to look forward to a future where other sectors, particularly IT, make a much more significant contribution. We should be about growing the IT sector, the biotech, the future technologies and having our primary sectors benefit indirectly, rather than looking to use IT to grow our primary sectors. Forward, not backward.

I realise this is not specific in its discussion. The massive growth businesses are not sheep farmers or milk producers. Facebook and Amazon are the faces of the new and old world now. Nowhere in this document is anything remotely like "We need to support the kids of today envision and create futures we can't imagine".

Specifically, imagine this scenario.

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2 kids meet in university. start developing some ideas about a new form of web interaction. They have computers, and internet, so they can download all the tools they need. Play some more, make some cool progress, and things become interesting. Finish degrees, and want to continue, but have massive loans, and really need some money, any money.

Option 1. Go on the dole. Kind of hard to justify, given they have IT degrees.

Option 2. Get a job. Work on project in spare time.

This is, more or less, the story of google. Except in googles case, they arranged funding from some angel investors, and the rest is history. There are a major shortage of angel investors in NZ (it is slowly beginning to change), so the government needs to facilitate this scenario. We don't want those people to go out and get jobs. We want them to work on their own cool things, and hope they succeed. Why can't these kids get funding, even a little, to continue to work on their project? Right now? They can't. No chance at all. I know, you'll point me to the myriad resources and incubators that might help. They all assume you have some funding to live on. Those kids can get the dole, but can't get funding to work on their own projects.

And nothing in the draft document addresses this scenario. We basically say, "you are on your own. We won't help you, until you have shown that you can make it without our help. Then, and only then, we will help, right when you don't need us". Great. Productivity increases are not going to come from "importing IT workers", or "Increasing the use of worldclass productivity tools". We need to MAKE the world class productivity tools!!! Not just use them!

And "equipping managers with the skills needed to engage with and use ICT to increase productivity and innovation."? We need to be creating, not consuming. Equipping managers? Management is not about innovation. We need to be fostering a sense of "lets try it, see what happens, and if it goes bad, lets try again". We don't have that, we have a situation of "do not try, because if you fail, all of the costs will be paid by you. We're happy to benefit after you have succeeded, but we're not going to help".

I apologise for the somewhat erratic discussion contained here. I am filled with a deep sense of frustration after reading the document (only alleviated somewhat by the call for submissions). The document to me reads to follow New Zealands "fast adopter" strategy. Which is simply a call to be left behind. So it is difficult to feel anything other than despair at a government document that appears designed leave New Zealand following like a lost lamb.

Please contact me for further details if required.

Best regards
Greg Day

Dr Greg Day Ph.D
Technical Director
getstaffed.com
027 582 3255

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