



Cultural connections on a global scale

By Jacqui Taylor

What began as one man's idea to connect a community has built into a web-based global enterprise encompassing the business and personal ideals of both the company director and those who work with him.

Home of Poi is a unique company selling a diverse range of products, from traditional Maori-style poi to fire spinners, staffs, juggling accessories and drums. Governing director, Malcolm Crawshaw had an interest in poi and juggling that grew to a small mail-order business out of his bedroom nine years ago; now the company has premises in Christchurch and uses a sophisticated, web-based sales system to reach its markets all over the world.

"Malcolm has slowly added more products to the range and we pride ourselves in our ability to find the right equipment for people and to solve their problems," says George McNeur, general manager. "The company is involved in more than just selling equipment, though; we are about how people use it. There are often links to their culture and emotions, together with a link to nature and how they use their bodies. Poi, juggling and fire sticks require users to be very physical, requiring dexterity, grace and strength."

McNeur says there is an increasing interest from school and corporate groups to use this kind of activity to bring groups together and build on their team work and individual skills.

"Activities such as juggling and poi work help with left-right brain co-ordination and offer a great form of exercise as well as excellent stress relief."

McNeur deals with the day-to-day running of the company, which has freed Crawshaw up to work with new ideas and designs and oversee the general direction he wishes to take the company.

"We have always been a community, and the website offers a place where people with like minds and like interests can get together and share their passion and their experiences. This is a part of our company we are fully committed to and plan to expand and strengthen in the coming months, together with ensuring our website is as user-friendly as possible.

"Our site has a lot of smart features that perhaps don't jump out at you, but are in the background working to make use of the site smooth and trouble free. For example, if someone is viewing the site from America, all prices are automatically in American dollars and there is a US phone number to call that links to the New Zealand company. People can be surprised to learn Home of Poi is a New Zealand company, that we run it from the other side of the world," says McNeur.

He also says that while ease of use is what customers will notice, those in the know are also impressed with the coding and secure, hassle-free site.

"I'm sure it's the whole family feel we have here that makes us a success. We do what we say we will do and people notice that. We do marketing of the company, but most of our business comes from word of mouth. We give our assistance as freely as possible, in many different ways, making each customer know they are important to us and are treated as an individual." www

**For more information,
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As Home of Poi's export delivery partner, we'd like to send our congratulations on their worldwide success and wish them well at the NZ Trade & Enterprise 2007 Export Awards.

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