

Signature Homes Building a winning business

Geoff Mockett and Dustine Palmer have learnt several lessons from their many years in business, but the most valuable has resulted in them being a multi-award-winning Signature Homes franchise, ranked as the region's leading home builder¹.



STORY
Sarah Ellem
Baker Tilly Staples Rodway Taranaki

Many lessons have been learnt by Geoff Mockett and Dustine Palmer from their years in business. As a result, they have become a multi-award winning franchise, ranked as the region's leading home builder.

So, what was the key lesson?

"We learnt early on that you have to surround yourself with exceptional people. Both in your own team, and those who support you," explains Dustine.

The Taranaki Signature Homes team has won a host of awards within the franchise in both 2018 and 2019 – Franchise Partner, Show Home of the Year and Best Market

Share. They also won Best Client Experience in 2018 and Best Systems and Processes in 2019. At this rate, they'll need to build an extra wall to hold all their certificates.

"Our team is exceptional at what they do, and we work together towards the same goals – from the front desk to our contractors on the tools, we're all on the same page to ensure our clients get the best experience from us at every stage in the process," says Geoff.

The couple has been the Taranaki franchise holder since 2004 when they moved their established building business under the Signature Homes umbrella. Looking to expand into the residential and light commercial space,





Geoff Mockett and Dustine Palmer added to their trophy cabinet with multiple awards at the Signature Homes conference in August, including Franchise Partner of the Year.

Geoff and Dustine realised that to establish their own brand equity and consumer trust it would take at least five years, so becoming a franchise partner was the right move.

They met with Gavin Hunt, the owner of Signature Homes New Zealand. "He came down to Taranaki and had a chat with us, and we could see that the franchise was growing and the brand was becoming more trusted and recognised, and they had great systems and processes in place.

"You can't be scared to change. To grow you often need to take a step back, look at where you are, and where you want to go to understand what is possible," says Geoff.

Geoff and Dustine talk a lot about people and opportunities. Their team, their contractors, the franchise group, and externally their three trusted and important external advisors: their bank, their lawyer, and their business advisor. They affectionately refer to them as 'the triangle'. As builders, it's not a surprise they chose the triangle as the description of the people that provide such important support. As the shape of trusses and gable ends the triangle is the strongest, most supportive geometric shape.

"We love working with Phil Macey at Baker Tilly Staples Rodway, he's part of our team, and he has supported and guided us through



"We invest in our people and the culture of the business and we don't shy away from celebrating our successes."

GEOFF MOCKETT



the good times and the challenging times. When he came on board his advice and capabilities far exceeded what we knew to be best practice for accountants," they state.

A while back when visiting their old accountant, they saw a bunch of IRD certificates on the wall and had a bit of an epiphany, realising that in a roundabout way they were effectively paying the taxman twice by accepting simple compliance services, delivered with no thought or planning, rather than receiving true business guidance.

"We've been in business since 1998 and have been through a couple of accountants. Working with Phil is so different from what we knew before - he feels like a partner in

our business. He gives great advice, draws straightforward diagrams and we come away feeling more in control of the finances and understand how everything can and should be working," they explain.

Dustine speaks passionately about the need for everyone involved in the business both internally and externally to be smarter than they, the owners, are in their area of expertise. They rely heavily on 'the triangle' to guide them; to provide a strong backbone to the business, but not in management. They know that their people and strong leadership are paramount to success. They take modern management strategies seriously, realising that to grow, the top-down approach doesn't apply, and they need to get the best people performing each function well.

"You must have professionals in every role. The days of trying to be the smartest in all things in the business have gone, and you must trust in people's expertise.

"We have people in our team that could take over the business tomorrow and make it a huge success. We invest in our people and the culture of the business, and we don't shy away from celebrating our successes." Geoff explains.

With all the recent accolades, there's often cake in the tearoom, team outings and national recognition throughout the Signature Homes group. They strongly believe in their entire team and are clear that a successful business comes down to clear expectations, investing in the right people, seeking true business advisors to guide and mentor, and always looking forward.

"A successful business revolves around all its people - we know everyone says this, and it sounds a bit cheesy, but it's absolutely true."

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1 Number of New Plymouth District Council consents issued.

