



CASE STUDY

Sharing a vision of what can be...

The challenge presented was simple, how do you get 28 disparate businesses to 'think, act, grow and prosper as one'

In March 2010 U&i consulting was commissioned by South Gippsland Shire Council in partnership with Mirboo Country Development Inc. to help the collective town centre businesses of Mirboo North to

1. Retain and grow the loyal custom of local residents
2. Optimise their share of the tourism purse
3. Further contribute to why Mirboo North is a favoured destination to live, visit, shop and work

U&i provided expert knowhow to devise and lead the delivery of a new local enterprise strategy entitled **Our Town Our Future™**, its purpose being to unite the thoughts and actions of the community through the creation of a business led – Town Centre Partnership

The Challenge...

Mirboo North's businesses had suffered as result of the 2009 bush fires and the businesses felt little had been done to assist their recovery. The impacts of the bush fires also highlighted the need to recognise

1. Collectively, they the town centre businesses were the districts major employer and therefore core to the vitality and viability of their town
2. Their need to accept accountability for managing the town centre as a business in its own right

The Strategy...

U&i immediately recognised the need to create a business led – Mirboo North 'Town Centre Partnership', the role of the partnership being to protect and grow the vitality and viability of the town centre and in turn the local economy by

- Winning their unfair share of available custom
- Actively contributing to why their town is a favoured destination to live, visit, shop, own a business and work

The Solution...

With the invaluable support of the **Our Town Our Future™** local sponsors, South Gippsland Shire Council and Mirboo Country Development Inc, all stakeholders who were key to developing a credible and effective ongoing Mirboo North Town Centre Partnership were engaged.

Extensive insights were gained from Mirboo North's residents, visitors, business owners and employees - the realities of today (the good and the confronting) providing powerful justification for change.

Collaborative teamwork underpinned the 'Expressions for our Future' workshops, resulting in clearly defined guiding lights upon which the Town Centre Partnership could start to make the right decisions, focus its collective efforts of today, build enduring relationships and **think, act, grow and prosper as one.**

Additionally the workshops enabled participants to recognise and prioritise the town centres future capabilities and potential areas of vulnerability, resulting in a 3 year Strategic Game Plan encapsulating the groups

- key desired outcomes
- each with stated financial and customer measurements of success
- accompanied by detailed initiatives chosen to actively drive the achievement of each objective

Being armed with a highly justified envisioned future for the town centre of Mirboo North, a game plan of what they wanted to achieve and how, supported by a knowledge that help would be at hand ensured appointing participants into the ongoing voluntary roles that make up the Mirboo North 'Town Centre Partnership' from the Advisory Group through to the Task Group Team Leaders and Task Group participants was a natural progression.

Lastly, the Our **Town Our Future™** initiative targeted the introduction of new skills, with focus being given to improved Team Work, recognising that *'Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress and working together is success'* – Henry Ford

The Outcome...

Creation of the Mirboo North 'Town Centre Partnership' whose role is to **'protect and grow the vitality and viability of their town'** and in doing so is united by their

- common purpose to **'be at the heart of a sought after lifestyle'**
- shared vision of a **'vibrant centre, catering for all'**
- collective knowledge of what success looks like and how to get there
- **Convert through traffic by becoming a '365 day' retreat from the norm with great meeting places where customers are made to feel special**
- **Grow repeat business by being a 'One Stop Shop' for all the basics and lots of surprises, bringing both convenience and inspiration to the lives of customers**
- **Increase visitor revenue by becoming a centre of attraction that offers instant visibility and easy access to all you can enjoy accompanied by a warm and rewarding experience**
- **Improve the return on retail sqm's by having a strong focal point for each business that draws custom into town supported by a reputation for consistently high standards**
- **Strengthen local customer loyalty by creating the next generation of proud Mirboo North business owners who welcome every customer with open hearts and doors**

The impact...

"Our Town Our Future has created a positive awareness that working towards a common goal will provide for a positive future. By a whole group focusing on the customer, the customer will feel valued and in turn will value the businesses in the town that provides for them. Customers will want to be part of our success!!"
Jeannie Kilpin, Brava Hairdressing

"The Our Town Our Future project has been a great way of getting businesses working together and forming a structured town centre partnership. Developing the 3 year game plan has identified key activities that each business can participate in at different levels." Alycia Stivic, Business Support Officer, South Gippsland Shire Council.

"Jo Bank's work with the main street traders of Mirboo North has helped them sort out what is important for them to focus on as a group over the next 3 years. Her capacity to raise their collective sight above the day to day issues of running their individual businesses in the face of some daunting trading conditions and accept some shared responsibility for the trading future of the whole main street has I think been the lasting legacy of her work here." Norman Walker, Bushfire Recovery Officer, Mirboo North and District."

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