

So this is Archangel's story...

*"It would be a good retirement project and just think, owning a vineyard would give us a wonderful lifestyle."* "Are you mad?" I told my husband? We knew nothing about wine, except for the fact that it would make us feel pretty good after a glass or two. Now I'm not sure if this was the lack of planning for our pension fund, or just mid-life crisis, but somehow, I was swept up in the romantic notion of owning a vineyard. My husband would continue to work and somehow, I would (by default) inherit a vineyard and all the work that goes with it!

We purchased land in 2001 and suddenly we were proud owners of a small patch of Central Otago. We began planting vines in 2003 and had our first commercial vintage in 2008. The timing wasn't the greatest – the world economy was in a recession - and here we were – a brand new wine and no market. The global situation put us in a place where we had no idea what was going to happen in terms of the future – no idea how this would play out. But we knew we had choices. We could view this situation – the glass AS HALF EMPTY, or - we could see the glass as being HALF FULL and see the opportunities that lay ahead.

Because we knew absolutely nothing about growing grapes or making wine, we decided from the onset, that we would bring together talented people who knew what they were doing– from the viticulturist to the winemaker - we set out to make the very best wine we possibly could. By 2009 when the wine was ready to go to market we had produced a beautiful Pinot Noir - it was an exciting start and the wine showed the potential of our vineyard site.

But we were told that having a lovely wine wasn't enough – this tangible asset of a bottled wine, was only 40% of our business. The remaining 60% comprised of the wine brand marketing - the intangible component of our wine business.

We were also informed that the brand would be our company's strategic asset and it was imperative it was developed foremost with the business strategy in mind. We would develop a brand footprint and from there, it would be easy – because, any interaction or communication the market had with the brand, would be seamless - and all similar interactions would carry a similar tone and manner. So, for us, the brand wasn't just about a great design – it was about cultivating a personality to be perceived by the consumer, whether it was real or imaginary. For us, the brand image had to encompass and express a number of components – e.g. how nature and human creativity would evoke a 'sense of place'. It had to be graceful in its appearance yet be timeless. Above all, it had to be distinctive and tell the story of Archangel. It had to capture all of these qualities in the visual imagery of the brand and at the same time be integrated into a business strategy for going out to the market - It wasn't going to be an easy task.

We approached New Zealand Trade and Enterprise to see, if and how they could help us. They were extremely supportive and re-iterated the fact, that the key to success was strategic planning. They asked we submit an application to them outlining what we required to help us achieve our goals. It was great news - we

qualified for a grant and began working with our chosen brand designers – hugely creative people, who had helped in the success of other wine brands.

And so, together with our designers, we set about to develop a business strategy that would define the core essence of our brand, the values, the positioning and the perceptions the wine brand needed to evoke. And with the target audience in mind, the Archangel brand was founded. We loved the visual identity that evolved and from there on, it would be an interesting journey to see how this 'Brand' would become a strategic platform for Archangel.

Having originally come from England it seemed the logical first step for us to target England as our first export market. So, with no marketing experience (and a great deal naivety) I headed to London and my first international wine show with New Zealand Winegrowers. It was May 2009, and the Archangel Pinot Noir 2008 had only been in the bottle just one month – when I think about it now, I can't believe how crazy that was. The London wine show was a daunting experience – a hall, the size of Eden Park filled with a sea of wine brands. Swarms of men in badly cut black suits, wandering en masse and pretending to know everything about wine – it was intimidating. But for Archangel it was a huge success and the feedback about our Pinot Noir and brand was amazing. In one week of being in England I had confirmed orders for 38 cases of Pinot Noir – the only problem was, I had no landed wine in the UK and worse still, the distributor I had chosen, turned out to be a total fruit and nutcase. Note to self - Do your homework when it comes to exporting and especially when it comes to choosing the right distributor!! We eventually did find a good distributor – in fact, the distributor came to us via recommendation from the client that I had sold my first 20 cases of wine to. So a rather fortuitous beginning for Archangel.

At the same time we were producing our first commercial wine, we were also working with planners and an architect to obtain resource consent for our vineyard. It was another master plan of ours – a long-term vision, to develop a wine destination on the vineyard – which would comprise of a winery, spa facility, 10 lodges, restaurant and tasting facility – a hugely ambitious project – but we had big dreams. We had visited numerous winery destinations in the USA where wine tourism and winery experiences were commonplace. We could see the potential here in Central Otago especially considering visitor numbers were on the increase. There was also a growing trend for better wine and food experiences and we wanted to capture this audience. We envisaged we could because of our very close proximity to Wanaka. We were successful in our application to council and granted Resource Consent for this development in 2008. Once again the timing wasn't the greatest and we decided to put this project on hold and until such time we felt confident to push it forward.

So, fast-forward to 2015. We could now boast that Archangel was being represented in 9 countries. But some of the markets we had were small and very fickle - the question arose - how viable were some of these markets? Back in Wanaka, we were being approached more and more for wine experiences and private celebrations on our vineyard. I was doing no advertising or marketing in this area – we realized people were searching for unique places to have their

private celebration – I had written a simple blog and posted this with some great images on our website and as a direct result of this people came to us. Every year for the last three years I have been hosting at least 6 – 7 events and all with no advertising.

Whilst all this sounds good, we felt our business had plateaued. We could see the potential of what we could achieve, but we were so bogged down with the day-to-day running of the business - we just couldn't see the forest for the trees. We knew we needed to bring focus back into our business and develop a strong plan to elevate us to the next level. We had a resource consent that needed to be implemented and we could see the potential of what we could achieve by creating a distinctive, vineyard destination experience for our visitors. We just didn't know how to go about doing it.

So once again, we approached New Zealand Trade and Enterprise. This time, they put us in touch with their regional partners and Tara Druce in Alexandra. We met with Tara and she explained how Regional Partners and NZTE were operating these days. Tara was extremely helpful and supportive. She suggested we sign up to the 'Accelerate Success' business program, as a new Business owner and from there, we could apply for an NZTE Capability Voucher, to allow us to work with a Strategic Business professional. Once again, we were successful in our application.

Working with the Business Strategist has been an invaluable experience. Not only has it given us focus, it has given us the skills and the mechanisms to implement a strategic business plan, that is a flexible, on-going - and with a clear, long-term vision for the business. It has given us the tools to move forward.

We have now begun construction of our new build for a wine experience destination on the vineyard and the resource consent that was granted back in 2008 has now triggered. The opening of the Archangel Wine Lounge and event space will be in December 2016. So exciting times ahead - And although this is stage 1 of our development, the long-term vision remains.

Now, I'd describe myself as a Yorkshire, Polish, Kiwi (and I'm proud of the mix) and somehow by default, have inherited a wine business.

I was made in Yorkshire - with grit and determination.

The Polish in me has taught me to be resourceful – the forager!

My adopted homeland of New Zealand has taught me the 'Can Do' attitude.

I don't pretend to know everything about wine but I'm also not afraid to ask for help. There are helpful people and great resources out there.

I'll leave you with a quote by Nora Roberts:

*"If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it. If you don't ask, the answer is always no. If you don't step forward, you're always in the same place."*