

# Local Business

**CONTACT US**  
Business writer  
**David Porter**  
Email david.porter@nzme.co.nz  
Mobile 021 884 8558



## Evolution reaps Skyline top award

**S**KYLINE Rotorua is delighted that tourism's contribution to exports was recognised in this year's ExportNZ BOP awards, says general manager Bruce Thomassen.

Skyline, which also won last year's Westpac Rotorua Business Awards, took out the top award at the recent Tauranga export event.

"From our perspective it's nice to get recognition for the tourist industry in the export arena, where we're competing in the awards against manufacturers," said Mr Thomassen. "The international tourism dollar is an export dollar — it's bringing foreign currency in."

The Exporter of the Year Award is given to BOP companies that have achieved extraordinary and sustainable export growth for more than five consecutive years. Skyline beat out finalists Automation & Electronics NZ and Ntec Tertiary Group for the top award.

The judges said Skyline had transformed its business, developing a multi-attraction and multi-activity venue providing visitors with a unique destination experience, while ensuring there was a clear understanding of all aspects of their business and what contributed best to revenue. The transformation has included



**TOURIST ATTRACTION:** Skyline's team at the export awards. (From left) Dean Johnson, Alison Kirkland, Bruce Thomassen and Andrew Jensen.

new Luge runs, wine tasting facilities, a revamped hospitality offering, new retail platforms, a mountain bike track and a dedicated star gazing observatory.

The winner had demonstrated sustained and outstanding performance and results in terms of export earnings, growth and profit; leadership and direction;

excellence in marketing; export strategy and business planning; commitment to quality management and governance.

Judges also noted Skyline's Luge offering now included fully owned and operated international installations in Calgary and Tremblant in Canada, on Sentosa in Singapore, and would open soon in Tongyeong in South Korea.

"Not content with rapidly increased international visitor numbers coming to them, they're now taking their iconic Luge rides direct to some of their biggest fans in Canada, Singapore and now in South Korea," the judges said.

Mr Thomassen said the judges' feedback acknowledged the transformation Skyline Rotorua had made.

"They recognised the impact Skyline has made in terms of our growth and the length of time visitors are staying and spending. It's a world class facility."

Mr Thomassen said the export award also recognised the company's success in creating an offshore tourist environment with the Luge. The South Korean operation was expected to open in December.

Skyline's head office is in Queenstown, where there is also a Luge, and the company has separate general managers for each operation. However, Skyline Rotorua manages the manufacture of the luge carts.

"We spread the component-making out around various Rotorua suppliers and assemble the karts ourselves, then they are shipped out to our offshore locations," said Mr Thomassen. He added that judges' expectations at the various awards events were similar.

## Focus on innovation wins NZ Manuka an export award

New Zealand Manuka chief executive Karl Graddon says the company's win at this month's ExportNZ BOP awards comes down to its focus on innovation.

"We've disrupted the industry at every point along the way," said Mr Graddon. "Our most compelling innovation is the whole way we work with our community, our employees, and our final products."

NZ Manuka, which won the Page Macrae Engineering Innovation in Export Award, has in

particular invested significantly in farming manuka trees. The company has been propagating and planting seedlings, grown in partnership with Rotorua research institute Scion, which will be mechanically harvested. This year the company plans to plant 4.9 million manuka trees, 25 times the number planted last year.

"No one planted manuka before the way we are planting it, so we had to go and invent the machine to plant it," said Mr

Graddon. "No one had done the intensive trimming and maintenance of manuka plantations, so we had to find ways to do it."

The company was set up by manuka honey pioneer Phil Caskey and is engaged in a variety of activities, including processing seaweed into laboratory grade agar and bio-media, producing a range of UMF Manuka Honey and natural health products, and turning manuka leaves into a range of essential oils and bio-actives.

Based in Awakere, the company has a processing operation at Opoitiki and works with an array of stakeholders, including beekeepers and landowners via partnership arrangements, in particular Maori trust groups in the East Cape.

The judges praised NZ Manuka for connecting local communities and their natural resources with consumers worldwide for highly differentiated, prized essential oils, and health and well-being

products that were uniquely New Zealand.

Mr Graddon said the way NZ Manuka worked with its community underpinned everything.

"We're willing to work in ways that the Maori trust landowners get a fair share going back to them, which is a sustainable business model for them, not just us," he said.

■ See Friday's business page for a profile of Phil Caskey, who won this year's BOP Export Achievement Award.

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