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Kiwi students win International Trade Challenge

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By Virin Gomber

This sounds nothing less than a magic carpet story, except that it came about as a result of a great amount of hard work, dedication, mental strength and business acumen.

Two New Zealand teams beat 42 teams from seven countries in the Asia-Pacific competition, the FedEx Express®/Junior Achievement™ International Trade Challenge (ITC) regional finals, a competition aimed at nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit and business skills of students in the Asia-Pacific region. The challenge this year was - to develop a market entry strategy for exporting carpets to Egypt.

It was the first time New Zealand competed in the challenge, and it won the first two spots.

Following a two-day intensive workshop, the students - Paul Minors (Rangitoto College) and Chuck Slogrove (Macleans College), won over the panel of judges with their unique interpretation of this year's challenge. Their idea was designed to appeal to the majority Muslim population in Egypt, a traditional Egyptian rug with inbuilt radio for prayer call, a lunar clock to determine the correct time to pray, a compass which shows the correct direction of Mecca, and a carry strap for easy mobility.



Chuck Slogrove & Paul Minors with FedEx & JA officials.

The second place went to the students Talman Madsen (Long Bay College) and Aimee Groom (Taradale High in Hawke's Bay), who came up with a concept of modular carpets made of high-grade New Zealand wool with a thin, non-slip polymer backing. Each carpet was presented in a pack of six modular pieces in different shapes and colours that could be fitted together to make one large carpet or used separately.

The carpets were produced in New Zealand in limited edition, using designs created by modern Egyptian artists, or could be customised to a preferred colour scheme.

Paul Minors and Talman Madsen are both North Shore secondary school students. "We are extremely proud of Paul and Talman's achievement," chief executive of Enterprise North Shore Terry Hoskins, said. "Paul and Talman are valuable members of the YES programme and display impressive business skills. The YES programme is designed to foster tomorrow's entrepreneurs and if this success is anything to go by, the future looks stunning."



Aimee Groom and Talman Madsen with FedEx officials.

Jointly organised by FedEx Express, a subsidiary of FedEx Corp. (NYSE: FDX) and the world's largest express transportation company, and U.S.-based JA Worldwide®, the world's largest organisation dedicated to preparing youths for the working world, the ITC was launched in 2007 and is supported by a US\$1million grant from FedEx over a three-year period involving markets in the Asia Pacific region.

This year, 42 students between 16-19 years of age from Australia, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and Thailand were selected to represent their markets at the regional final in Singapore after competing at the local challenge in their respective home markets. The winning teams were selected based on two main criteria: content and presentation. They were scored on their thoroughness, creativity and professionalism in developing and executing their business entry strategy.

"The new ideas and innovations that entrepreneurs bring to the marketplace are crucial to building strong, resilient economies. FedEx support of the International Trade Challenge is part of our commitment to educate and inspire young people to become next-generation entrepreneurs by honing their creative, analytical and critical thinking skills to excel in an international business environment," regional vice-president, FedEx South Pacific, David Ross, said. "The challenge gives these young people a first-hand experience in planning for a business and learning what it takes to deliver their products to the right place at the right time. We are impressed by the passion and creativity of the students and the quality of the business entry strategies presented."

"FedEx recognises that entrepreneurs play an important role in the global economy and even more so during an economic downturn. The International Trade Challenge is part of FedEx commitment to educate and inspire young people to become next-generation entrepreneurs by honing their creative, analytical and critical thinking skills to excel in an international business environment," regional vice-president, FedEx South Pacific, David Ross, said. "The challenge gives these young people a first-hand experience in planning for a business and learning what it takes to deliver their products to the right place at the right time. We are impressed by the passion and creativity of the students and the quality of the business entry strategies presented."

The Challenge, which is in its third year, attracted a total of 1690 students from Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Korea,

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Singapore and Thailand, who participated in the ITC workshops from April to June 2009 where FedEx employees volunteered their time to coach the students and facilitate business lessons.

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