

# 5 Minutes

## Louise Lawton talks with Sven Baker, managing director of Designworks

### Who are you, what do you do and who do you work with?

**Sven Baker:** Who am I? Now this is a question I think we all ask ourselves on occasion. Followed by: What is the meaning of life? why am I here? What is my purpose? Unfortunately the answers to these questions are rather long and complicated so I will stick to the question as I think it was intended.

First and foremost I'm a designer. Always wanted to be, always have been and always will be.

I've been with designworks for over a quarter of a century. Why? Well, I've never found anywhere else I would prefer to work. I love what we do, love the way we do it and I'm privileged to work with such a talented group of passionate people. We're a company with a very clear understanding of our purpose: 'To design the most successful New Zealand brands in the world' It's an idea that goes to the heart of our belief that 'design integration' is a vital factor in New Zealand achieving a sustainable prosperity. Our ability to turn commodities into luxuries, and to tell inspiring stories that draw the world to our shores for trade and tourism and that can take New Zealand products to the world, is key to our future as a country. This is our passion and it drives us to challenge the conventions that so often inhibit imagination.

The great thing is that we're able to apply our approach across the commercial spectrum, from the country's largest corporate such as Telecom, right through to small entrepreneurial businesses like HotChilly. The need to have

a well-defined competitive strategy and a brilliantly designed business to succeed is universal. Enlightened business leaders are really starting to understand this and it's putting plenty of demand on this part of our services.

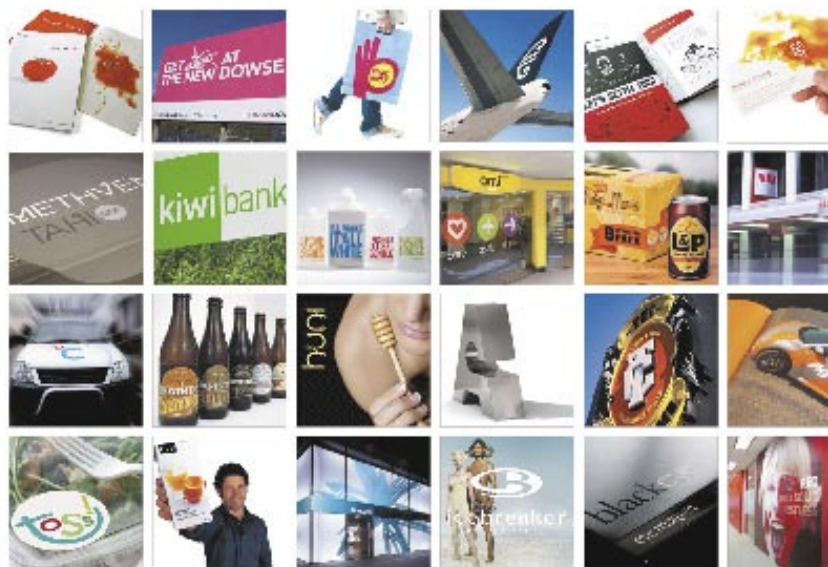
### What are you working on at the moment?

**SB:** We've been working with Telecom for over a year now on a true business transformation program. A radical rethink of the business, its role, value and relevance to New Zealanders. By anyone's reckoning, it's a seriously challenging undertaking. But for me personally, and the company whole, it's been a defining project. What people have seen so far is not a logo, it's a symbol of change and an organisation that's committed to delivering it. The program is a complete inside-outside rethink with a significant focus on culture, internal engagement and product and service improvement. After all, we're well aware that a brand is what a brand does, not what it looks like.

It's easy for people to sit on the sidelines throwing criticism about a new logo and nothing changing and, given recent history, quite understandable, but the reality is these change processes take time. I would suggest we wait and see.

### What piece of work are you most proud of?

**SB:** Anything we've done that has changed the game. Our work for AMI that redefined what an insurance company could be. The enduring value of 15 years developing the Monteith's brand and experience, work that ushered in the new era of quality



craft brewing in New Zealand. I'm proud of work that delivers a step change in the cultural and commercial performance of a business and looks great doing it! Like the HotChilly program that completely reframed the business and saw it grow 300 percent in just two years.

### What's your favourite design medium?

**SB:** Space. The absence of the unnecessary.

### What do you think are the greatest issues facing designers at the moment?

**SB:** Demonstrating value and ensuring the work we do goes deeper than the aesthetics. I mean ideas beautifully delivered in a way that connects with people's feelings because it's based on a compelling truth. The work Formway is doing leads the way in the product space with true user-centered design thinking informing everything they do. Most designers don't think like this and it's a big issue when it comes to New Zealand's global competitiveness.

### Where to from here for Designworks?

**SB:** We're a company in very good heart, we know where we want to go and we're doing a lot of work on how we're going to get there. We believe in our ability to deliver an enduring advantage for our clients because we have a clear commercial understanding of the role powerful design thinking can play in business success.

Moving forward it's quite simple. We want to continue to focus on what we're good at, which is working with New Zealand companies, both large and small, to help translate their business strategy into design thinking and branded experiences that deliver on the promises they make.

**designworks.co.nz**

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