



NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL OF EXPORT

Exporter Profile

Sally Symes is Trading Manager at Sacred Hill Wines

Sally was born in Gisborne and after achieving School Certificate embarked on a finance career. With experience in several banks around New Zealand, she studied for an accounting degree through correspondence and then at night class at Manukau Polytechnic. To compliment her studies, Sally moved into various accounting roles ranging from assistant accountant, to financial accountant and then Foreign Exchange/Import Manager.

Sally then spent two years overseas, spending time in Singapore, Thailand and India before returning home in the early nineties when she took up the post of Administration Manager at an Auckland based computer supplies firm.



In 1995, Sally made the "move to Paradise" when she was appointed as Administration Manager for Sacred Hill.

From there, she became involved in logistics, then shipping and developed relationships with many of Sacred Hill's fledgling export clients, eventually growing the position to that of Export Manager.

In 2008, this changed into a trading position and Sally is now Trading Manager at Sacred Hill.



What does the new job involve?

"Now I manage all the Intellectual Property for all of the Sacred Hill group. I oversee bulk buying and importing of wines and manage foreign exchange. I am the account manager for all bulk or buyer own brand material, including overseas clients and supermarket chains."

Given that Sacred Hill exports 50% of its portfolio and is one of the ten largest wineries in New Zealand - Sally is kept busy.

Studying for the Diploma of International Trade

Despite her demanding role, Sally has found time to study at the New Zealand School of Export. With the Certificate of International Trade already under her belt, she is now well on the way to achieving the Diploma.

But why study now?

"As I have had no formal training in marketing or exporting, all I know is what I have learnt on my feet. As I did not inherit the position of exporter, rather it developed, I do not have a dedicated mentor in the company. "

Although the executive have a formidable range of skills which I have been able to tap into over the years, I felt it was time to find out what I didn't know and to up-skill."

So far, Sally says the main benefit of studying with the School, is the positive affirmation that she and Sacred Hill are on the right track. She has also picked up a lot of new knowledge and developed her skills, although the downside is always finding the time: *"but I have found the School to be more than accommodating in this respect."*

What are the skills and knowledge necessary for a successful career in International Trade?

"People. To be successful you must enjoy people and be able to, which means in reality want to, form genuine relationships with people. When sales become difficult for one reason or the other, the relationships you have will be invaluable. These relationships are formed on trust and service and if they are strong, they will stay with you in one form or another for life."

What are the greatest challenges facing New Zealand wine exporters?

"Wine is reducing in price as currency markets fall and supplies increase, but selling poor product, even at cheap prices will destroy the reputation it has taken NZ wineries so long to develop."

With the benefit of hindsight, would Sally do anything differently?

"I would have embarked in study such as the Diploma straight from school so that I was armed with this type of knowledge into the world of trade."

Fortunately, the advice of former boss Dave Davies, has stood her in good stead. Dave taught Sally that anything was achievable with hard work and self belief.



What would she like to be doing in ten years?

"This is difficult as I love what I do. However, I would not be adverse to increasing my knowledge through different product ranges, or in the support service for a while so, selling New Zealand in some way from New Zealand or overseas."

Sally's favourite country for doing business?

"I like most countries. The US is so diverse, it is like dealing in 50 countries and in Europe its the same. Asia is exotic and challenging, Canada and Australia so like home."

Any stories you would like to share?

"I was chatting to a taxi-driver in Texas on the way to San Antonio Airport and he asked me where I came from, apparently I have a strange accent! When I said New Zealand, he told me he had just holidayed there last year. Impressed that I had met a Texan who had been here, I asked where he had visited. He couldn't remember the name of the place but knew it started with an A. I went through the alphabet recalling all the towns and cities I could think of but then he remembered ... it was Adelaide!"

NB: Sally is reluctant in front of the camera, but we think she just can't stand still long enough for anyone to snap her!