

SUCCESS STORIES

## Nicholson Autos: From fighting fires to driving strategic growth

### THE CHALLENGE

As Nicholson Autos started to grow and expand it was faced with the challenge of retaining its family business feel while still driving the business forward at the same time.

The Nicholson team recognised they needed a strategy management system to keep them on track for achieving their aspirations.

Nicholson Autos, a family owned dealership in Morrinsville since 1980, is now run by brothers Dean and Ross. As the company began to grow and expand it was faced with the challenge of retaining that family feel while driving the business forward at the same time.

Working with MSH Consulting since 2017 the business has gone from strength to strength and now has five dealerships in three towns.

Managing Director Dean Nicholson says the 'seat of the pants' management style that had served the company well when they only had two dealerships to contend with, no-longer cut it as the company grew.

"Things were getting more and more chaotic with firefighting becoming the norm. Although we were doing a lot of things right it felt very messy, very hectic and chaotic and disorganised. We needed to change the way we were doing things and so we called in MSH Consulting."

### CREATING THE STRATEGY

The company knew they wanted to get more strategic but didn't know how to go about it.

"Family businesses can easily fail, and we didn't want to be one of those that did. Andrew came in and helped us to flesh out a vision and values, develop our mission statement and work on some of the basics."



MSH Consulting Director Andrew Darlington, says he used a four-step strategy design approach with the Nicholson's team to help them understand what they were trying to achieve, how they could achieve it, and to establish a reporting system to monitor progress over time.

"I also worked with Dean and Ross to develop a new structure which ensured there was role clarity, and the capabilities needed for Nicholson to successfully achieve their strategic goals."

Dean says that it was about having a strategy and then turning that into operational reality.

### OPERATIONAL REALITY AND THE STRATEGY

"It was about putting the nuts and bolts together. Strategy and operations are two separate things, but they are interlocked. We needed to separate them out and look at whether we were strategically doing the right things – and then look at what we needed to do operationally to make the strategy happen," says Dean.

### THE OUTCOME

We worked together on developing a strategic plan that built on Nicholson's existing success but put structure and processes in place.

This meant they could continue growing and opening more locations in the medium to short-term, as well as looking at some of the longer-term challenges such as succession planning.

The company has experienced massive growth, is operating more strategically and professionally and has extremely strong leadership.

"Andrew put some time into working out what the structure should be so Ross and I could get above the business and guide the business, to run it and run the culture."

### DRIVING CULTURE CHANGE

"The biggest improvement to our business over the time we've worked with MSH Consulting and implemented the strategy has been our culture," says Dean.

*"Having the right culture in your business is very important and you need to have strong leadership to drive that culture. We worked with Andrew on a set of values that would drive the behaviours we needed in the business."*

Dean says the company is focused on its communities and looking out for customers while at the same time meeting targets and being financially resilient. The values they adopted to drive the behaviour needed to deliver on their goals included; flawless delivery, do what's right, respecting our community and personalised service."

### BEING PREPARED TO CHANGE

Setting a strategy and then implementing it is a huge undertaking says Dean.

"If you can't take criticism as a business leader then you're not going to win, and you won't be successful in business. We had to lay bare our faults, take criticism and make changes. These are hard things to do as business owner, but you just need to face up to it and make the changes."

### WORKING WITH MSH

Dean says that working with MSH Consulting is the best thing they've ever done as far as working out what the business is about and what they're about as people.

"MSH Consulting are a very professional team and Andrew is an extremely talented guy that we have a lot of faith in. We have a great relationship with Andrew and feel extremely lucky to have gone through the process with them."



Ross and Dean Nicholson – the driving forces behind the company.

For more information visit [www.mshconsulting.co.nz](http://www.mshconsulting.co.nz)