

Chamber launches export initiative

by Christine McCafferty

WHEN you identify a smart business opportunity, research it, test the market and do not compromise the opportunity by taking short cuts, says John Pittar of Gisborne's Milly Molly Group.

Mr Pittar and wife Gill spoke last night at a meeting of Gisborne Chamber of Commerce's export club, which was also the launch of regional export education.

The Pittars are one of Gisborne's great success stories when it comes to coming up with a unique concept and selling it to the world.

Gill Pittar based the idea for Milly Molly on the old style topsy-turvy dolls, with the message that while we all may look different, we are still the same in many ways.

After first manufacturing the Milly Molly dolls, Mrs Pittar ended up writing a book and from there it was like "opening a dam".

"It's the world or bust," Mrs Pittar said.



Gisborne Chamber of Commerce Export Club held a seminar last night to launch their regional export education initiative. From left are Gill Pittar, Haans Frauenlob, Anne Pardoe, John Pittar and Janet Takarangi.

Picture
by Rebecca
Grunwell

"Now we are selling our books to over 100 countries and we are working on a television series that will be previewed later this year."

Developing a sound business plan was key to their success, Mr Pittar said.

The aim, was to continually improve. Finding a good manufacturer was also imperative and the cheapest offer was seldom the best.

"You get what you pay for. When you find a good manufacturer stick by them through thick and thin — including price increases — because they will look after you in the end."

Mr Pittar said it was important to recognise a good deal took time to negotiate — it had taken over a year to finalise the deal for the Milly Molly television show.

All the key people in Milly Molly are Gisborne based and Mr Pittar said there was huge talent in Gisborne — just waiting to be launched to the world.

Guest speaker Haans Frauenlob — the senior director for New Zealand Trade

and Enterprises (NZTE) Information Communications Technology sector — agreed there were endless opportunities for Gisborne people to participate in the international playing field.

There was also plenty of support available from NZTE to help get their ideas get off the ground.

"We want to help businesses prepare and execute international production and turn accidental exports into sustainable ones.

"Export is incredibly important to our country but over the past 20 years our performance relative to our competitors has been average. Our future challenge is to lift our export performance — it is essential to our future wellbeing."

NZTE has Enterprise Development Grants available to assist with initial costs of establishing overseas exports, while the staff can also offer qualified export advice.

Further information about the Enterprise Development Grants is available on the NZTE website.