

Right at home in a man's world

Vanessa Farrington runs the show at a Manawatu muffler business, reports Jimmy Ellingham.

IN A male-dominated industry, Manawatu Muffler Centre owner Vanessa Farrington is showing the boys who's boss.

Mrs Farrington has run the Palmerston North business for 15 years; the business has been around for 35 years in total.

Originally she and her husband, Colin, ran the centre. Now Mr Farrington works for New Zealand Windfarms, although he still spends weekends fixing exhausts.

"I find being in a male industry really easy," Mrs Farrington said.

After a long time running the show and the customer service side of things, she has still not had a go at welding.

But it would be fair to assume that side of the business is in safe hands – all Manawatu Muffler Centre employees have worked there for at least six years.

Before the Farringtons bought the business, Mrs Farrington sold photocopiers.

"I just find you can be the best that you can be in whatever field you're in."

Manawatu Muffler Centre was one of only two firms in New Zealand that specialised in exhausts, she said.

A new website had recently been launched, which included the well-known Manawatu Muffler Centre cinema advertisement that was a regular before movies in Manawatu for years.

Day to day, Mrs Farrington said, she often spent a lot of time driving customers around while their cars were in the workshop.

"I can be driving people all day." There were no big expansion plans



In the driving seat: Manawatu Mufflers manager Vanessa Farrington with Matt Bonnington, left, and Scott Eastwood. Photo: WARWICK SMITH

on the horizon, but Mrs Farrington said the firm owned the building next to its Cuba St workshop, so building a larger garage would not be a problem.

In the meantime, it was looking to attract more cash customers coming in for one-off jobs.

Maybe the recession has had an unexpected spinoff.

Mrs Farrington said most cars needed a new muffler every three years, but as people kept their cars for longer and the vehicle fleet ages, more regular services would be required.

Outside of work, the Farringtons were keen on motoring. "We're a car family."

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Vanessa Farrington

Manawatu Muffler Centre owner

BUSINESS BUZZ

Q&A

Name: Vanessa Farrington.

Number of staff: Three workshop employees and Mrs Farrington – and sometimes her husband too.

Annual turnover: Would rather not say.

Why are you in the business that you're in? I love the people I deal with.

Who do you admire or respect? Steve Lang from Tony's Tyre Service. It's a business that I would like to replicate.

What's the best thing about doing business in Manawatu? It's the people. You know everyone you're talking with.

Family: Husband Colin and three daughters; Grace, 11, Kate, 10, and Anna, 8.

What's the best piece of advice you have received? You can make friends in business but you can't make business out of friends. I've always stood by that philosophy.

Manawatu needs . . . an international airport.

I am reading . . . *Toughen Up* by Michael Hill. I've just finished *Slippers* by Mark Blumsky.

My favourite movies are . . . *Second-hand Wedding* and *Separation City*.

The biggest barrier to success is . . . failure.

If I wasn't doing this job . . . Something to do with sewing or crafts.