

“Thankyou” very much for your kind donations... Introducing Thankyou Payroll



Thankyou Payroll is a Dunedin-based social enterprise – an online payroll service that channels government subsidies into a trust that provides community grants.

The company provides free payroll services to small businesses and charities using the IRD’s payroll intermediary subsidy to cover their costs and donate to the Thankyou Charitable Trust. Several team-members from this now thriving ‘social business’ are Otago alumni – including the director, the designer and ‘sales wrangler’.

Co-founder, director and chief technical officer Hugh Davidson gained degrees in Design for Technology (with first class honours) and Philosophy, and designer Tom Bond was a teaching fellow at Otago for three years. Customer wrangler and environmental adviser Letisha Nicholas holds a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from Otago and is currently working towards a Master of Science in Geography.

In 2014 Thankyou Payroll won the Otago Chamber of Commerce OBIZ award for Ethics in Business, and the company was a finalist in the New Zealand Innovation Awards for Innovation in Financial & Professional Services and Excellence in Social Innovation.

The company has an office in Wellington and employs staff in Christchurch.

We asked Hugh and Letisha to share some interesting Otago memories, and some career highlights.

Career highlights

Hugh: “I was very lucky to be employed straight out of university by the IRD as a service designer. I gained valuable experience and worked with great people. The vast majority of the highlights associated with working for Thankyou Payroll have come in recent times. We’re really proving ourselves and we’re doing it in a unique and awesome way. “

Plans/Goals for the future

Hugh: “Thankyou Payroll has product development plans in place that will hopefully see it as one of the world’s top examples of design and usability in the business service space. We want to explore our options globally too.”

How Otago has helped to shape your life and career success

Hugh: “I attended Otago twice. The first time, after three years, I had only passed seven papers. The last six months of the third of those years I just stopped turning up. After a period overseas I decided to return and study again, discovering I had a passion for Design and Philosophy. The internet had arrived as an easily accessible study tool and it was a perfect storm really. I found subjects I enjoyed and a tool for research that suited me perfectly. By the end of my time at Otago, I had taken 60 papers and was getting great marks. I really found a home within the Design department at Otago.”

Memories of favourite or stand-out lecturers?

Hugh: “Grant Gillet [a neurosurgeon at Dunedin Hospital] taught several Philosophy papers that had a short life at Otago. I revelled in them. I consider myself very lucky to have been able to take them and I'll always appreciate the fact that he took the time to teach them – considering he must have had plenty of other things he could have been doing..”

What do you remember about your Hall of Residence or flatting experience?

Letisha: “I flatted in 2012's official worst flat. The flatmates retrofitted it with the help of the landlord to turn it into a warm, healthy and energy efficient home. Recently it has received a paint job and 2kw Solar PV on the roof. Recognising the poor state of student flats, the team decided to scale up the project and created Rate My Flat.”

Do you have memories or impressions of Dunedin that you'd like to share?

Letisha: “The first time I hiked up Mount Cargill with the tramping club and could see 360 degrees of Dunedin, Silver Peaks and Blueskin Bay. Not views you can see when you're down in the thick of it at Uni!”

Personal highlights?

Letisha: “Potluck-style Sunday brunch with all of our buddies, meeting and getting to know people from all the around the world who had come to study at Otago, including postgraduate new-comers from Australia, America, Nicaragua and local [Dunedin residents] all around one (big) table. And of course the many flats, in all of their glory.”