



PETER MACAULAY

## Digital Projects Encourage Content Creation, Confidence in ICT and Collaborative Connection

*New Zealand Digital Strategy unites government, business, academic and personal interests to change society*

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Peter Macaulay just may be a digital literacy mastermind. As program manager of New Zealand Digital Strategy (NZDS), executive director of InternetNZ, owner of Number One IT Group and a volunteer contributor to the e-City network, Macaulay not only designs and directs digital literacy projects and initiatives, but he also passionately supports programs that will bring information and communications technology (ICT) into government, businesses, schools, communities and homes in New Zealand.

"I observe where holes occur and channel resources from other areas to fill them," Macaulay said of his work. "I identify needs and pressure the government and businesses to work in these areas. It's exciting work, and I'm fortunate to find roles that fund me to do it."

Perhaps Macaulay's most notable accomplishment has been his work on the NZDS, a five-year, \$400 million government plan designed to maximize ICT opportunities in New Zealand. The extensive plan identifies key actions and milestones that use ICT to promote economic and social development. It also provides additional seed funding to stimulate follow-on activities.



The overall strategy focuses on content, confidence and connection. The National Content Strategy encourages digitization of existing content and development of new content. The plan specifically focuses on the Māori population and the distinctive subject matter the indigenous tribe can provide. According to the strategy, "Māori digital content is important not simply for its economic potential but also as a vital means of expressing Māori culture in today's society" by "strengthening Māori society and identity, telling Māori stories to other Māori and communicating with the wider world."

Strategy programs also ensure telecommunications and the Internet are reliable, safe and secure, and New Zealanders have the digital skills and confidence to use ICT. Children, adults and businesses are taught to understand the dangers of ICT, and legislation protecting against pedophilia and spam was instituted. From these initiatives, Macaulay said ICT users gain the self-assurance to use ICT and use it well. "Parents need confidence in technology," he said.

As New Zealanders are taught digital skills, Macaulay supports digital literacy standards among the people. "To ensure students know where they stand, to ensure teachers have a starting point with new students and for employers to be able to compare job applicants, standards are vital," he said. "In addition, consistent standards will improve the quality of teaching."

The NZDS also maintains that affordable, high-speed Internet access drives productivity and economic growth. Encouraging the uploading of content as much as the downloading, broadband networks will be established in 15 major cities, and municipalities, utilities, schools and hospitals will be networked and have access to at least 1 Gbps connections by 2010. In addition, "Broadband Challenge" seed funds are used to finance open-access fiber networks in urban, metropolitan, remote and underserved communities.



Through the NZDS, a Community Partnership Fund was launched to finance other community ICT projects. Many of the resulting ventures of the four-year, \$20.7 million seed fund create real benefits in underserved New Zealand communities.

"The NZDS was a big win," Macaulay said. "Through it, we facilitate and encourage use of technology. We leverage the government to create a vision of change in society."

Macaulay said when businesses are confident with technology, opportunities arise. "Digital literacy in small business is what's going to change our society in the next 10 years," he said. "Technology provides the tools for change. New 'digital communities' maintain contact using technology. Look at the 'Māori Whanau,' or 'extended family'—they can keep in touch with technology and encourage language development."

As Macaulay works to "de-silo" government, he believes schools, libraries and hospitals should share capabilities. In his current position with the New Zealand Ministry of Health, he spearheads an effort to combine district educational and health facilities in common broadband networks. "They should share physical connections and network infrastructure," he explained. "They already use common business principles, and the reality is that information holding has similar attributes across these areas. We ought to be able to create an environment where they can access the information they need with confidence."

Macaulay sees the potential of digital strategies like New Zealand's to have global impact. "My goal is to develop a global community with passion and to see the vision go forward," he said. "We will see change in society—especially in areas like China and Cuba. As we keep working, other nations will see our success and it will flow throughout the world."

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