



Former model, judge and photographer on *America's Next Top Model* and Invivo 'gambassador' Nigel Barker.

## BOTTLING INGENUITY

The New Zealand wine scene is not settling with the status quo and nor is Invivo. The Te Kauwhata winery is taking on the world with the help of a few famous names. Co-founder and marketing director Tim Lightbourne talks expansion, experimentation and entertaining.

Sit down to talk to Invivo's Tim Lightbourne, and you'll likely be catching him between flights. Since starting the brand in 2008, he and Rob Cameron, the winery's director, winemaker and co-founder, have traded working from home for membership in the frequent flyer club as they've worked to take New Zealand's wine to the world.

It was named in Deloitte's Fast 50 growing companies in 2012 and that momentum's continued as it's achieved a 91 percent growth in export sales in the past year to keep up with demand in the 17 countries it's now sold in.

In New Zealand, it's also going from

strength to strength, with a 29 percent growth in the past year credited, in part, to its new partnership with Lion New Zealand.

Setting itself up for further growth, it's recently appointed former Accolade Wines CEO Paul Schaafsma to its board as an independent director. Lightbourne says it was an exciting move for Invivo and he has bought into the idea of making it a truly international brand.

That goal has been in place since day one. But what Lightbourne and Cameron couldn't anticipate was the GFC and Lightbourne says they had their fair share

of challenges thrown at them.

"What was not part of the plan was the economic environment at the time. Banks weren't forthcoming with overdrafts and things, therefore we had to do whatever it took to survive."

Their response was to do what no other wineries were doing. In 2015, it was New Zealand's first winery to get crowd equity funding, beating previous records to receive \$2 million from over 400 people who got on board as shareholders.

They've also stepped up the brand's marketing, bringing in advertising agency The Goat Farm in 2013, to expand the





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brand's relationship with Graham Norton. The celebrity talk show host was already a fan of the wine (and a shareholder) and served it on *The Graham Norton Show*, so the idea came about to have Norton make his own wines and tell the story. With four vintages featuring the GN label, as well as a soon to be released Italian-made Prosecco, it's been a huge success for all involved.

The idea has since been followed up by a partnership with former America's Next Top Model judge and photographer Nigel Barker to make him a "glambassador" and, closer to home, Paul Henry has made two Pinot Noirs.

The Goat Farm's owner and creative director Vaughn Davis credits the brand for wanting to brush aside the usual wine bullshit to instead speak truthfully about what it's doing – all without being boring.

"It's relatively easy to have big ideas and every advertising creative has had countless big ideas in their career, but what's rare is for a client to say 'yes' to them and make them happen," he says. "Our partnership with Invivo has been all about not just us having ideas but having the courage and the flexibility to turn them into a reality."

That bravery on Invivo's part to create products around those ambassadors and



tell those stories has allowed it to unlock doors that would otherwise remain closed, and evidence of this can be seen in the 190 press articles about the brand in the past year alone.

"We wouldn't be able to get that traction, that media, if we were just doing the trade show standing next to 500 other wineries," says Lightbourne.

In saying that, Invivo has proven its capability to stand out alongside other brands in competitions. It's won eight gold medals in the US, China and Australia at their largest wine competitions and it was placed third for video of the year from Wine Spectator against the US and International wineries.

"All the marketing in the world wouldn't help if the wine didn't stack up," says Lightbourne. "For example, the Graham Norton wine – people buy it for the name, but we hope they come back for the quality of the wine."

Tim Lightbourne (left), Graham Norton and Rob Cameron.

