



Building regional strength and resilience through co-working space | **DATACOM AND INNOV8HQ**

With 50 years' experience in technology, Datacom is New Zealand's largest locally-owned IT-based service provider. With more than 6,500 people spread across New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and the Philippines, Datacom operates in an industry that is constantly evolving and growing.

Datacom helps organisations and regional communities by connecting people and technology. Their vision is to be sought after by organisations to explore new possibilities and solve their greatest challenges. In the South Island, Datacom comprises a team of two hundred and fifty talented people based across Christchurch, Nelson, Dunedin and Invercargill offices.

Service support out of the Dunedin office deals with ministerial agencies, Domino Pizza cameras, large regional clients like Silver Fern Farms, and Lotto. Having local staff in critical roles really helps initial client engagement and the team can call in resources from around the group if required.

We caught up with Sonny Taite Head of

Datacom Regional NZ to get his insights on building regional strength through relocation to a co-working space

Why did Datacom consider relocating to a coworking space?

ST-“Datacom views Dunedin as an important regional hub. Our primary goal is to support our local customers but we can also work on national and international as required from remote offices. We have a small team that performs roles in field services, software engineering and application management like Salesforce. Project managers and business analysts are supported by a local account manager. With our commitment to growth we became aware the lack of office space would become a problem. Our physical location was at the back of a mall and was not very inviting as it was located beside public toilets. Internally the layout was messy, with no WOW factor. Ultimately we wanted a physical environment that reflected the Datacom values as an industry leader, innovator, and space that increased staff collaboration and engagement as well as a place you'd be proud to host clients and prospects.”

What were Datacom's biggest challenges in relocating to a co-working space?

ST-“In 2019 we had a lot of internal team changes going as we executed for growth. Ironically although we had issues with the previous location and team culture when we shared the idea of relocating we got quite a lot of push back about moving. Concerns included; where they would be moving to, fear of losing control, fear of moving kit, fear of managing inventory in a different facility and fear of co-working environments.

At management level we were also concerned about services and security. We needed to ensure the rest of Datacom was not at risk by relocating. For software and hardware we need security that meets the highest requirements of government and Lotto clients, even our security cameras need approval!”

What due diligence to complete to scope your relocation options?

ST – “We did our research by personally visiting various operators in the Dunedin market to identify pros and cons. Overall construction and access were of comparable quality standards while the layout of facilities ranged from office centric to open plan with varying flexibility of floor plans and furniture. Location of administrative staff ranged from separate to inclusive with residents. What really stood out was the operator’s ability to listen, take feedback and remain agile to our needs. This became a critical factor in our choice of location.”

Why did you end up choosing INNOV8HQ as your co-working home?

ST – “There were a variety of factors that made this decision easy for us. Firstly the location at 123 Vogel street has a compelling vibe of innovation as a business precinct. This naturally infused our team

and can be shared with our clients, partners and prospects.

Internally the layout was very welcoming with a great mix of open plan and meeting rooms including a superb boardroom. The environment offers a created natural sense of intimacy, stability and fresh air to hire locally as we grow. As an IT based company the level of security and technology also gave us comfort.

At a team culture level Heidi Renata as the co-owner and cultural concierge was a differentiating factor. She listened to our needs and remained very flexible as we discussed layouts, team, company and partner requirements. This gave us an immediate sense of authentic collaboration and openness. Without doubt her energy is a uniquely positive part of the INNOV8HQ experience. She and the other residents have created an authentic community vibe which we felt part of from the first engagement.”



CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 UPDATE

How has COVID-19 impacted Datacom and service delivery?

ST – “COVID-19 will go down as one of the most impactful scenarios in our lifetime, complete disruption across the world with profound repercussions. We now face a new normal. Like many organisations Datacom enacted its core Business Continuity Plans in response to the pandemic and are grateful to have no reported cases of staff with the virus.

Fortunately pre COVID-19, we had scoped and tested the option of staff working remotely so when lockdown occurred the transition was easier to manage. This meant that from the 23rd March, over 75% of our workforce began working from home. The remainder working onsite in various locations around the country as essential services which included our data centre operations team in Dunedin.

“Under Level 4 protocol we limited facility access to essential only activity to minimise health risks and potential for further disruption. During this period we were able to witness the value of INNOV8HQ as a safe co-working environment. Carl Crawford, Field Engineer, Datacom Dunedin described it well - INNOV8HQ allowed me to support key customers like Zespri, MBIE, NZ Post from Dunedin during Covid-19 with its 10 Gbit internet connection, 24 hour secured access, great sound system and coffee machine! I would have struggled working from home, as I share a house and being

able to work from the office during this period gave me a real sense of normality”

So 6 months down the track what are the key results?

ST – “Our new environment is inspiring and the INNOV8HQ experience takes care of daily resident pastoral care and overheads related to managing small remote teams. The unique manaakitanga (hospitality) and coffee is great and not to be underestimated.

The team and management are much happier, stable and engaged. What has been really powerful is the huge sense of pride in the co-working space. This is a space and community they want to be in and be part of. Anecdotally we hear from other northern offices rumours of “location envy”, another patriotic benefit of being Dunedin based.

Similarly our clients and partners love the location. In our previous location we were reluctant to host. As we grow and hire “INNOV8HQ is also a differentiating advantage for recruiting new staff. Interviewing onsite is a great teaser for their future.”

INNOV8HQ Co-working Profile

INNOV8HQ Ltd is Dunedin’s premier co-working space designed to support and grow start-ups, SMEs and regional corporate teams. Founded in 2016 and wholly owned by the local Renata family, it is located in 123 Vogel Street, the modern hub of Dunedin’s business precinct.

INNOV8HQ is home to 12 resident business-

es representing 10 sectors and a growing cohort of non resident co-workers, training and event guests. The space offers over 373sqm of resident space, 100sqm of hot-desk space, 20sqm of meeting room space, 11sqm kitchen and 9sqm of fully equipped rest facilities. Co-share services range from 10Gbit fibre capacity with 1Gbit wireless WIFI, online web service support to printing, photocopying, and refreshments. Residency 24 hour access is secured via SAITO swipe technology and building



“Having worked in the ICT and corporate sectors for the last 20 years, in addition to leading regional teams, I could fully appreciate the demands and challenges corporates face when maintaining regional growth and profile. Datacom’s position is similar to many regional corporates and one that INNOV8HQ has a vested interest in supporting to enhance their regional outreach and team culture. It’s been a pleasure working with the team in this fast changing environment and being able to support them in our space as an essential network provider during the COVID-19 response.”

-Heidi Renata, CEO and Co-Owner INNOV8HQ”