



Invercargill based IFS Growth has 25,000 hectares of forestry under management contracts throughout New Zealand.

# ‘Little forestry co’ with big vision

**Richard Loader**

With 25,000 hectares of forestry under management contracts throughout New Zealand, Invercargill based IFS Growth considers it is New Zealand’s best little forestry company.

“We are growing,” says CEO James Treadwell. “But we want to keep that ethos of being that ‘little forestry company’.”

Being the best little/big forestry company means retaining the same can-do spirit, a fun place to work and sense of family that were central to Dan Minehan’s heart when he bought himself a Ute and started pruning trees back in the 80s.

That was the spirit that led to IFS Growth being established from the ground up.

“Dan’s a great thinker, a great strategist – that’s his strength,” says James.

“He saw an opportunity to take the concept of forest management and offer a slightly different service that was a bit more family orientated using technology to a greater extent.”

Born and raised a child of the forest with the legacy of a pioneering spirit – Dan’s a woodsman from a long lineage of foresters – his father was and still is in the industry, as was his father and his father before him.

After building his business around Southland – particularly around the Invercargill Spec-forests and helping Invercargill City Forest Ltd grow its forest estate quite considerably, Dan recognised the need to expand.

“Another of Dan’s strengths is knowing his weaknesses,” explains James.

“So he brought myself and a couple of others in to help him grow the company outside of the Southland area.

“ In the space of about three years we went from an office in Southland, to offices in Southland, Upper Hutt, Kaitaia, Nelson and Marlborough and we’re probably going to start one up in Taupo very soon.”

One of those that Dan brought into ‘the family’ was his father Des.

With an extensive forestry background, Des seeks out new business opportunities to apply the IFS Growth service standards.

James says the company’s growth has resulted from identifying key investors and helping them find forestry, rather than waiting for forestry owners to come knocking and asking them to manage it.

“We have gone to clients and told them we can build you an estate – and as a condition of building you the estate we want to manage it.”

With strongly held ethics in looking after the environment and contractor safety and wellbeing, James says that IFS Growth has turned down good work because it didn’t have confidence that the other side shared the same ethical values.

“There are some people who are certainly coming into the country just to buy fibre and to rip as much fibre out of the country as they can.

“They don’t care about the domestic infrastructure or anything else and we won’t deal with those types of people.”

IFS Growth currently employs 21 staff with another couple soon to join the family.

There’s a mix of professional forest managers spread around the country, along side an administrative and finance team.

The company also does GIS Mapping, but rather than employing foresters who have done some GIS papers, GIS specialists are employed, then trained in forestry.

James says that the power of GIS mapping technology makes life in the forest so much easier.

Close to 300 others are employed as the company’s contractor workforce.

James is clear; people are the most important asset that IFS Growth has. He says that while the bottom line is important, it is not the most important thing.

“The driver is having fun doing the work and giving the best we can back to the forest owner both financially and also caring about the land and environmental management and health and safety.”

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