

Computer Villages expand with Auckland franchise

FRANK Goldingham is applying provincial wisdom to the business of selling small computer systems. His Computer Village is the fastest-growing of all the re-selling franchises.

Mr Goldingham has lived and worked his entire life in Manawatu and now he has set out to apply the sense of thrift and market positioning he has learned after more than a quarter century as a provincial business leader.

Next month he opens his Auckland Computer Village. This will be fully owned by his flagship company Viscount Electronics which already owns Computer Villages in Levin and Wellington.

There are two Computer Villages in Wellington. The Computer Experience in James Smiths is in fact Computer Village, but Mr Goldingham



Peter Isaac

opted to retain the name of the store he acquired from Andas.

Then there are the owner-operated Computer Village franchises such as the one in Willis Street which has just opened. And the South Island Computer Village franchises in Christchurch and Dunedin which are also owner operated as is the Computer Village in Napier.

These are operated in the same way as a McDonalds or Best Western franchise. Mr

Goldingham's Viscount Electronics provides centralised procurement and accounting along with centralised marketing strategies, and of course, the comfort of name recognition.

Including the two Computer Villages he operates in Palmerston North, Mr Goldingham by next month will have nationwide coverage of almost 10 stores.

The Computer Village franchise group is based on the microcomputer. Throughout his career as a re-seller, Mr Goldingham has remained steadfastly with the Commodore.

He believes it is a superior machine because Commodore makes all its own parts, especially the microprocessor.

Because Commodore makes its own components, the machine is

more reliable, Mr Goldingham says.

An example of how the Computer Village chain works is provided by the procurement of the Seikosha printer. It was selected by Mr Goldingham because it runs with the Commodore and because its price is pitched at the Computer Village market, and because of its reliability.

Reliability is crucial to Computer Village because reliable systems mean that expensive time and service is not absorbed by follow-up repairs.

The Computer Village concept is based on beliefs that Mr Goldingham has honed during his career as a re-seller in Palmerston North. His operation there, Viscount Electronics, began with the age of computer re-selling.

He builds his franchise

group on the concept of small shops, a first-class pedestrian flow, and people behind the counter who know and understand the system they are selling, which in Computer Village is of course the Commodore series.

There is one other important principle — there is no discounting.

The Computer Village chain is also built on the notion that the computer has now become a consumer item. Mr Goldingham's stores reflect this concept in that they are packed with products — there are no half-empty shelves. He piles high, and sells low.

But wait a moment. Where is IBM in all this? It seems only recently that for anyone to succeed in re-selling they had to carry the seal of good housekeeping of the accredited IBM dealership.

"Who are IBM?" asks Mr Goldingham with a dry smile. In the age of the clone, indications are that IBM and Mr Goldingham of Church Street, Palmerston North have concluded that they can do business without each other.

Just to rub the point home Mr Goldingham introduced his own personalised clone labelled the Viscount PC 88, of which he is out of stock due to cruising in at a price that

even established clones could not match.

Mr Goldingham has come loping in from the heartland with new ideas on how to sell computer systems in the consumer bracket.

It is an area in which several players from the big battalions have already come to grief.

But Mr Goldingham is convinced that the application of rural canniness will open up the big market for consumer computing.