

Misha's Vineyard breaks free!

Having been locked into a website developed by the prisoners at Singapore's Changi Prison for the past two years, New Zealand's Misha's Vineyard has broken out and launched a new website at www.mishasvineyard.com to create a more sensory experience for visitors.

The unique approach to the original website development came about because Misha and Andy Wilkinson, owners of Misha's Vineyard, spend a lot of time in Singapore and had heard about Changi Prison's innovative rehabilitation programs which includes a Digital Media workshop. This program had primarily focused on government or quasi-government websites but was looking to expand to a more commercial focus.

"We thought working on a vineyard website with wonderful New Zealand scenery would be an interesting project for the prisoners so we were happy to be one of the prison's first commercial projects," says Andy.

Work programs were introduced into Singapore prisons as early as 1945 but in 1976 a statutory board called Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) was established to enhance the employability of offenders and prepare them for reintegration back to the workforce. Last year SCORE provided work opportunities to an average of 3,500 inmates daily in 51 prison workshops across the island. The

business units within SCORE include Food Services, Linen Services, Subcontracting Services, Industrial Space Leasing and Digital Media.

"The initial website was fantastic but it was created while we were still in the development stages of the vineyard so it didn't need to provide a lot of information or functionality," says Misha. "With commercial volumes of wine due to be

launched this November along with the commencement of our export program to Asia, and a rapidly growing interest in our brand including more than 1,200 followers on Twitter, we're at a point that we need to enhance the whole website experience for visitors."

The new interactive website, developed by Singapore online marketing company Bain & Mercer, leads visitors through a much richer experience under banner headings of Discover, Explore, Indulge and Participate. Some of the features of the new site include an interactive vineyard map, Misha's blog, various discussion forums, a downloadable Japanese brochure, links to YouTube videos as well as links to Facebook and Twitter.

"Not only are there lots of ways to interact with customers but we have also provided lots of information about the history of our vineyard, our journey and how the brand was created. Given we live in a much more dynamic world now, people expect to be able to communicate directly with a brand and they want to share

experiences so our site has been optimised to build this community," says Misha.

Although Misha's Vineyard has moved on from Changi Prison, they recently discovered that the developer who did most of the work on their original site has also moved on. "Our key developer is out of jail and now leading a web design company," says Misha.

