

# Spark chief to lead innovation expedition to Israel

AZHA 28.5.16

Fran O'Sullivan

Spark NZ chief executive Simon Moutter is leading the first New Zealand Innovation Mission to Israel this coming week.

Moutter told the *Weekend Herald* he was approached by the Trans-Tasman Business Circle to lead the mission.

The purpose behind the 50-strong mission is to learn from the world-leading Israeli innovation ecosystem, forge new business collaboration opportunities between New Zealand and Israel and develop ideas that could contribute to the unleashing of New Zealand's potential.

The Circle has taken several successful Australasian missions to Israel, and through its extensive networks has put together an outstanding programme for the mission.

A number of leading business people are on the mission, including Foodstuffs North Island CEO Chris Qain, Phillip Mills, who is director of Les Mills International, Unitec CEO Dr Mick Ede, Mighty River Power chief executive Fraser Whitney and Vector CEO Simon Mackenzie.

The Prime Minister's chief science adviser, Sir Peter Gluckman, is also part of the leadership team.

Moutter said that in many different ways Spark was itself at the centre of a lot of the digital transformation going on.

"We're an NZ-based company, run by New Zealanders, and we have a strong vested interest in doing what we can to help drive a better future for our country."

The mission will visit leading Israeli companies and institutions.

This includes Start-Up Nation Central, which connects companies and

Simon Moutter,  
Spark NZ chief executive

countries to the people and technologies in Israel that can solve their most pressing challenges.

Start-Up Nation Central was inspired by the 2009 best-selling book *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*, which explores the roots of Israeli innovation. The book continues to generate enormous demand from around the world for access to the people and technologies of Israel's innovation ecosystem.

Said Moutter: "Personally, as managing director of Spark NZ, one of NZ's largest listed companies, I have committed to bring my company's technology capabilities and extensive resources forward to help drive innovation and entrepreneurship, aligned to a digital world."

"As a father of five young New Zealanders and the employer of thousands of mums and dads with families of their own, I want a better future for all our young people. I want New Zealand to be a fantastic place for our children to live and prosper."



Simon Moutter says Israel's reputation as the Start-Up Nation suggests it has much to teach New Zealand. Picture / Dean Purcell

Why Israel? Moutter reckons while there are obvious differences, New Zealand shares many things with Israel. "We are both relatively young countries, with a culture and heritage of innovation, as well as some similarities in terms of market scale - from our perspective Israel is a more comparable point of reference for New Zealand than larger innovation ecosystems such as Silicon Valley or

Shanghai. How has this small nation less than 70 years old, with less natural resources than New Zealand, in one of the most volatile regions in the world, become widely known as the Start-Up Nation? I believe it will be invaluable for New Zealand to have greater insight into this journey."

- Fran O'Sullivan has joined the mission as a guest of the Trans-Tasman Business Circle.