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## Alan Marion Profile – Regional Development

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Alan Marion has been working in and with the food and grocery sector for his entire career. He has been heavily involved in the promotion and distribution of Fresh produce since the early 1980's.

Alan worked in organisations including Mars Corporation in the role of National Merchandise manager, responsible for over 80 staff, before being head hunted to a start up fresh salad Company, Ready Cut Foods. In his role as National Sales Manager, Alan had fresh salads accepted into all the major supermarket chains and into the Deli cabinets. This initiative was the beginning of what has now become common practice for all supermarkets.

In his position at Ready Cut Foods, Alan set up a unique fresh food distribution system to enable fresh salad deliveries three days per week. As salad sales decreased in the winter, Alan introduced fresh soup to the distribution network. The soup line was highly successful and the first fresh soup to have an extended shelf life. Alan then sold the licence for production to a British dairy company.

After Ready Cut Foods was sold for an excellent profit, the owners started "The Original Juice Company". As International Sales Manager, Alan used the fresh food distribution system again, and grew the sales from zero to \$45million in 7 years.

At the time of the launch of The Original Juice Company, farmers were ploughing their fruit trees into the ground as concentrates from Brazil and California were coming into Australia at \$80 per tonne. The local farmers couldn't compete. To support farmers and ensure longevity of the project, The Original Juice Company paid their growers \$220 per tonne, which allowed for long and mutually beneficial partnerships.

In 1995 Alan started his own consulting Business, Trainex Systems. For 25 years, Alan has specialised in assisting small to medium businesses grow. Alan has had a particular focus on growing Regional businesses and during drought periods, Alan was used to consult to 52 Victorian townships to motivate and create new ideas to get businesses back on their feet.

Recently, Alan was responsible for the program Buy Fresh - Buy local. In the Bass Coast region, this project had great success in cutting down the consumption of junk food and increasing the consumption of local fresh produce. Creative merchandising strategies and the set up of local distribution, supported the success of this project.

In 2015, Alan ran the Buy Fresh – Buy Local program for the East Gippsland Council. By motivating farmers and the 25 general stores, and setting up distribution via local Fruit & Vegetable shops, the region had an increase of local fresh produce usage from 23% to approximately 82%.

The Buy Fresh – Buy Local program also helped struggling farmers. Alan worked with farmers to set achievable goals and create new and innovative ways to sell their produce. This supports farmers in a tangible way, allowing them to feel they have some control over their circumstances by finding ways to create income streams and assist them to create a positive outlook for the future.

In addition to his consultancy work, Alan is a regular judge for Business awards and is a regular guest speaker for Councils and Business Network Groups.

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