



From shuttlecocks to blazing saddles

Spanning hi-fi, whiteware and now saddlery, we look back at the career of Warren Brewin. **Merv Robertson** reports.

WARREN BREWIN STARTED his working life as a Quantity Surveyor but in July 1979 moved to a sales liaison role with **Louis McDonnell's** Electronic Engineering Division at Pye.

He was soon on the road as a rep, selling cable, speakers and componentry. One **Roly Magness** at Magness Sound was among his best customers.

Few will know that Warren also once briefly played badminton full time, cutting short his budding career at Pye in favour of briefly moving to London.

On his return to New Zealand in March 1980, he spent a year as a sales rep at pharmaceutical wholesaler Beecham NZ.

But his start in "our" industry came when he joined AWA in 1981 as a rep working for **Harry Van der Vossen**, who was ex Bond & Bond, selling brands like AKG, Revox, Ortofon, KEF and Hitachi as well as Clarion car audio.

His time at AWA was "tremendous! I learned a lot from Harry and really got to know the retailers." This would be advantageous when, in February 1985, Warren left AWA to join Email as Sales Supervisor.

Warren's reputation grew quickly, to the point when, after just eight months, he was lured back to AWA as a Regional Manager for Taupo north and grew the region to 54% of Wellington-based AWA's total revenue.

The shift from brown goods to whiteware

Then in August 1987 he moved into whiteware at Appliance Marketing, was owned by Ceramco and bought by Simpson Appliances (NZ) around 1990, the name changing to Email Appliances (NZ) in June 1996.

With three divisions – Simpson, Atlas and Prestcold – eventually, all three brands were brought together under the Simpson umbrella and Warren became overall Sales & Marketing Manager at a time when the cooking business was nothing if not "competitive".

In the mid-1990s, there had been a significant change for the industry: Whiteware Corporation pulled the pin, effectively taking Shacklock out of play; Simpson Appliances dropped Prestcold in favour of ramping up the Simpson brand and, shortly after, would launch Westinghouse.

Looking for scale, Warren Brewin was also closely involved in



Fishing is one of Warren's favourite ways of relaxing.

1989 in inviting electrical contractors and service agents with a small retail area, plus its existing retailers, to join the new independent marketing group called the Simpson Network.

It worked so well in fact that in 1993 the Simpson Network became a separate entity called the Appliance Network Society (also known as Appnet) and supply lines were opened up to include other suppliers, so members had access to a comprehensive range of product categories and a variety of brand names.

In June 1994 Appnet secured the New Zealand licence for Beta Electrical and Warren Brewin joined

the group the next month, replacing **Bob Godward** as GM.

"My time at Appnet was exhilarating," recalls Warren today. Such was the momentum created, he says, that "At that stage I believe we were the biggest multi-brand whiteware group in the country by a stretch."

Out of the industry but back in the saddle...

In 2008, Appnet sold Kitchen Things, at which time Warren decided to move on and in February 2009 he joined Cash Converters as Group General Manager.

Uncomfortable with the environment, however, in October that year he set up his own company, Universal Inspiration, which he ran from home as he took 18 months off to build his dream home in Stanmore Bay.

Since July 2011, Warren has been at Lifestyle Retail Group, which trades as Saddlery Warehouse. Based in Albany selling all things associated with the equestrian industry (except horses!).

Warren started out as Franchise Manager looking after the retail network but was appointed CEO for the group after a restructure and has led the company through a transformation from high indebtedness to being a profitable, well-funded business.

In November last year the company launched in Australia and Warren Brewin is pleased to advise that the Saddlery Warehouse is going really well with strong growth. "It's exciting mate and I'm lovin' it!" he says. 🐎

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