



WAYNE JOHN BURTON

A leader, a mentor, a gentleman and a friend

On the 18 February 2009 family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances of Wayne Burton gathered to farewell a giant of a man, taken in tragic circumstances from those that loved him.

Two phrases from the day linger: “a man is measured not by what he has gained but by what he has given”, and that his passing was like the felling of a great totara tree – “Ka hinga te totara i te wao nui a Tane: The totara tree in Tane’s great forest has fallen”.

Both phrases bear the ring of truth. His family and friends speak of a lifetime of generosity and in the 29 years the home appliance industry enjoyed his presence; his accomplishments were many and varied, always gracious.

During this time Wayne performed a number of roles, including marketing manager (NZ and Australia) for Thorn EMI Domestic Appliances and divisional manager for the Home Appliance Division of Retail Trading Services. He was appointed general manager of Appliance Connexion Limited (ACL) in July 1998 and became chief executive of both ACL and Appliance Connexion Group Services Limited (ACGSL) in April 2003.

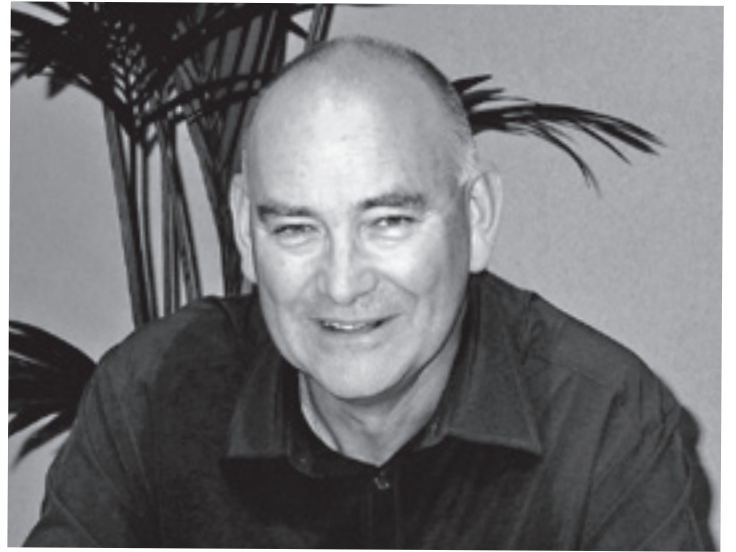
Under his leadership, Wayne celebrated the buying group’s 10th anniversary in Sydney last September. Colleagues, members, suppliers and competitors alike respected him. As Peter Drummond, chairman of ACL said in his eulogy: “Wayne Burton was a leader. Wayne had a vision. He not only wanted ACL to be the largest independent buying group, he wanted members from other buying groups to join ACL. An opportunity for this to take place came about on Christmas Eve last year. Wayne, with his team, worked tirelessly to ensure the merger of Retravisation with ACL by the set date of 2 February 2009.

“On the day of the accident, Wayne and his team had been at the Grand Chancellor Airport Hotel welcoming 33 new shareholders and explaining the day to day running of ACL as a result of the merger. Wayne was passionate about his work. He was also passionate about his staff. He was a perfectionist, and would spend many hours preparing for a presentation or a conference.

“He would seek and consider all options from his team in the developing of policies and procedures, that would enable ACL to stand out in the market place and to return maximum profitability to his members. Many a cunning plan was prepared and implemented. And if one of the plans didn’t work, it was simple, he would just go to Plan B.

“Wayne was a gentleman and had time for everybody. He had a wonderful ability to mix and mingle at all levels, and put people at ease. It was Wayne who developed the relationship with Narta, the largest home appliance electronic buying group in Australia. And from that relationship, Narta NZ was formed with ACL the largest member.

“Wayne was his own man. Members, suppliers, staff and myself, would sometimes try and sway him to our point of view.



I nearly converted him to Vodka Martinis, but he’d always return to his Scotch.

“Wayne put a lot of effort into relationships with his suppliers. He was highly trusted and he knew that a successful supplier relationship would offer his members the greatest opportunity to be successful. And with the home appliance electronics industry being a dynamic sector of the economy, there was always change, whether it be product or people. And the time spent building strong relationships would win in the end.

“When we had to make the phone calls to the members, suppliers and friends, and when we received the mountain of emails and condolences, there was a common thread – it was that Wayne was a lovely man, he was a great bloke. His level of integrity, work ethic and energy was contagious. His personality was infectious.

“Wayne was a pleasure to work with – he always delivered. The company will never forget Wayne’s high level of contribution and achievement. Wayne, you were extremely successful in everything you set out to do. On behalf of ACL and the industry, you will not be forgotten and you and your smile will be sadly missed. We are all thankful that we had the opportunity to have known such an incredible man.”

Wayne Burton has left behind a legacy. When a totara tree falls it leaves behind a gaping hole in the forest canopy. This is felt by all. However, through Wayne’s life and work he has ensured a rich and fertile loam to nourish those growing in his memory. May that canopy opening be filled by those he has mentored and let others gain strength by following his example. Wayne Burton, the industry is poorer for your passing but infinitely richer for your influence on it. You are sorely missed.