

Moving with the times

SERVING THE RAGTRADE FOR OVER 30 YEARS, Bruce Moore Agencies has gone from strength to strength, providing the industry with a range of services that covers all of New Zealand from its base in Christchurch.

How did the Bruce Moore Agency begin? My entry into the rag trade started for me in 1974. I commenced travelling for Bing Harris Sargoods - Dunedin, covering the lower half of the South Island. The good old days at Bings lasted just four years. I was then invited to join V H Bennetts Ltd, a Dunedin industrial wholesaler and agency company, to manage the agency department.

18 months later I had the opportunity to purchase their Agency business. We were given 24 hours to purchase it or find another job. With little capital, together with partners Neil Attwood and George Coster we took up the challenge. George left us soon after to work in the signage industry. Neil and I covered the entire South Island, getting by on hard work and the 'smell of an oily rag'. In Christchurch,

we stayed in a caravan at the Riccarton Motor Camp, until business built up enough in Canterbury to base ourselves in the Adelphi Motels on Papanui Road.

Taking over two of the Adelphi living areas and two bedrooms (four mini showrooms) and filling them with sample ranges we had customers coming every hour on the hour, from as early as 8 am and through to 10.30pm, 6 days a week. Smoke filled rooms - samples all over the place - sometimes three or four customers between the two of us, (because we were running late) and general chaos. This was all pioneering stuff for a couple of country boys from down South.

For over 15 years we covered the South selling a wide variety of product ranges, baby and infant clothing right through to high ladies fashion. We were the "never let chances go by" boys of the South and during some seasons were known to have up to 28 different agency principals between us. At one stage we had a team of five agents all working together, each covering the entire territory with their own dedicated ranges. Because this was taking a lot of time keeping tabs on it all, I commissioned the writing of a custom contact management computer program. It proved a godsend, ensuring no-one missed out. The software, after numerous revisions, is the main reason why BMA can handle so many collections today.

My wife Carol and I moved to our present Christchurch base to centralise the business in 1994. Christchurch provides a great environment for the family and is a great place from which to work the whole of New Zealand.

You've probably seen changes in the economy and market over the years. Have recent economic events affected business?

Agency work in some way reflects the rollercoaster ride of the economy. Having said this though, by sourcing product with a point of difference this past year, we have seen some very positive results. Flexibility is our motto, and we can respond very quickly to assist independent retailers, normally the first to run into change and difficult trading conditions. The larger ships - the national chains - take a lot longer to turn. Because of this, we have found a remarkable response especially from the Ladies Apparel industry where things are pretty much "Business as usual".



What market groups does your agency service?

We continue to present to Ladies - Men's - Children's - Swimwear - Active wear - Bridal and Formalwear - Fabric by the metre to retail stores and manufacturers - steaming equipment for product presentation.

What are Bruce Moore Agencies goals for 2010?

We hope to continue striving to improve our service to our customers, and to build our business relationships. To continue upgrading our website information to provide easy information reference for customers. To have traders see us as one of New Zealand's leading Agency companies.

Do you have a five year plan?

We most definitely do. Carol and I hope to encourage one or two young individuals to join BMA, to train with us, with the vision of running the agency company in the years to come.

What drives Bruce Moore?

I have always had a heartfelt passion for promoting good product that works. During the past 36 years I have done business with thousands of people.

The real reward is not the money, although it helps - it's when business relationships become 'friend relationships' and from there lifelong treasured relationships.

My real thrill these days is to be involved in the "Team of Commerce". Be it brainstorming - being a devil's advocate - being a handbrake - or just working the moment of importance. I hope I can continue to be part of the team assisting with the creation of successful outcomes in the New Zealand garment and textile industry.

www.bma.co.nz.